

BERADES' PORTAL



Issue #3

HERMES' PORTAL

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HERMES' PORTAL

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Who's Who?

David Chart

David Chart has been writing material for *Ars Magica* since the first *Wizard's Grimoire*. He was co-developer of the *Wizard's Grimoire Revised Edition*, author of *Heirs to Merlin* and is currently the *Ars Magica* Line Editor. In real life, he is a mild mannered teacher of philosophy.

Niall Christie

Niall Christie is a mediaeval Islamic historian, currently teaching and researching at Cornell University in upstate New York. His wife, Steph, is a Visiting Professor in the Department of Mathematics at Cornell, and so they don't argue about their work very much.

Niall has been playing and writing material for *Ars Magica* since he was first introduced to the game in 1992. He is also involved in the Society for Creative Anachronism as a singer and storyteller. He says his hobbies allow him to explore the "what-ifs" of history that wouldn't stand up to academic study, but this may just be an excuse for being a roleplaying geek.

Erik Dahl

His name means "King of the Valley." He is a Cancer, which means that today is a 7. He works as an information architect, which involves applying strategy to web design and drawing up site maps. He has been playing *Ars Magica* for about seven years, and has been a part of a troupe for almost a third of that time. He and his wife live in Davis, California with a lot of books, theater props, musical instruments and cooking utensils. He also heads his local chapter of the American Association Against Acronym Abuse, Abbreviations and Ambiguity (AAAAAAA). You can listen to the wacky music of his band Volvo Maroon for free at <http://www.volvomaroon.com/>.

Timothy Ferguson

Timothy Ferguson is 28 and works as a library locum in Thuringowa, North Queensland, Australia. He's currently fossicking about for a new job, as locums do, and studying for his next degree.

Robert Hansen

Robert Hansen is a mundane currently studying engineering. He spends his copious free time playing RPGs, creating computer artwork and sleeping. He has been known to ask his teachers if the formulas provided are 'in paradigm'. His alter-ego Vaska, a scarred member of House Flambeau, is known for carrying a very large sword with which he total fails to hit his enemies.

Eric Kouris (publisher)

Eric is 34 and teaches mathematics. He began playing RPGs in 1982 with FGU's *Chivalry & Sorcery* (instead of AD&D), then *Space Opera*, *Call of Cthulhu*,... In 1989, he turned to *Ars Magica*, and in

1994, he began publishing a French zine for *Ars Magica* named *Ars Mag*.

Angus MacDonald

Angus MacDonald has been playing RPGs since 1976 and *Ars Magica* since about 1990. Aside from a fixation on Criadon characters, he has a fascination with the Arthurian legends that now extends to over 500 volumes on three bookshelves. He is still looking for the proper cat with whom to share his apartment. He is also a part-time storyteller, full time punster and noted pilgarlic.

Michaël de Verteuil

Michaël de Verteuil, Canadian political analyst, *Ars Magica* storyguide, co-author of *Ordo Nobilis*, amateur medievalist, occasional contributor to *Ars Mag*, and a noted Berklist pugilist, is the lead writer for Heretic's Corner, a column devoted to suggesting simplifications to the *Ars Magica* rules and to providing simple solutions to rule problems. Michaël (pronounced Mee-ka-el) is currently a consultant for the pre-planning phase of an upcoming French language medieval adventure TV series based on the house of Savoy and aimed at young teens. Interested readers are invited to submit suggestions or comments concerning Heretic's Corner to m_de_verteuil@sympatico.ca.

Radja Sauperamaniane

Radja is working in a game store in Paris. He worked on the card game *Zoon*. He has been doing illustrations for *Ars Mag* since issue #11.

Angela Taylor

Angela studied English Literature at Clare College, Cambridge, and Mediaeval History at York, taught for some years, then married Neil. She draws and paints, while making rude comments about Neil's gaming (fair enough, really!); she is a non-gamer... almost a "gaming widow" even!

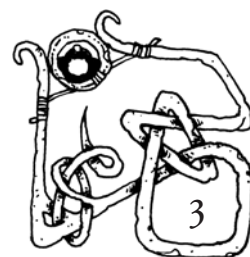
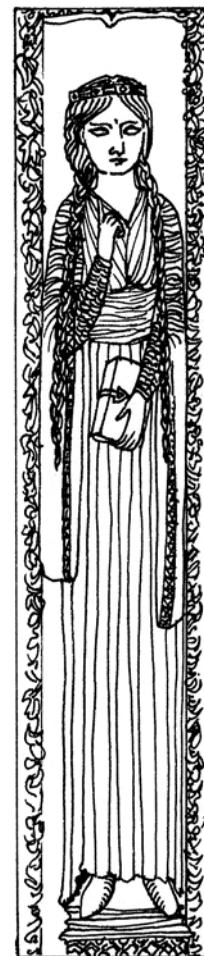
Sheila Thomas (editor)

Sheila Thomas has been editing technical publications for paper and electronic publication for years. This is her first attempt at doing it for game material. She discovered RPGs about ten years ago and has been playing *Ars Magica* for half that time. She also plays *AD&D* regularly, enjoys board and card games, and is on the committee organising the UK Conjunction convention for August 2003.

David Woods

David Woods is an Optical Designer in the Telecoms industry. He lives in the county of Devon in the UK with his wife Amanda. They are expecting their first child around the end of May.

David has been playing *Ars Magica* since 1993. He is currently involved in two *Ars Magica* sagas, one fortnightly and the other when his old university friends can be gathered from the far corners of the globe. Currently most of his spare time is spent writing material for *Ars Magica* and buying baby equipment.





Familiars

by David Chart

This is a completely revised system for binding familiars in *Ars Magica*. The primary aim is to encourage magi to bind familiars by making them obviously useful, and making it sensible to bind them early in a magus's career. The secondary aim is to bring the process within the normal laboratory rules, rather than requiring its own rule set. The first stage of the process, finding the familiar, proceeds as before. The magus must find an animal with inherent magic, which accepts the magus as a companion.

Initial Binding

The laboratory total for binding the familiar is any Technique + any Form + Int + Magic Theory. Affinities may apply to this, as may laboratory specialisations. The level for the enchantment is equal to the familiar's Magic Might plus five times its number of Body Levels (including the OK and Incapacitated levels). A magus can only bind a familiar if his lab total equals or exceeds this level. If it does, he can bind the familiar in a single season. This costs one pawn of vis for every five points or fraction thereof of the level. The vis used must match either the Technique or the Form used in calculating the Lab Total, and the magus may use both kinds.

Examples (taken from *The Medieval Bestiary, Revised Edition*):

- Binding a cat has a level of 15 (No Magic Might, 3 Body Levels). It costs 3 pawns of vis.
- Binding a magical raven of virtue has a level of 30 (Magic Might 15, 3 Body Levels). It costs 6 pawns of vis.
- Binding a wolf of virtue has a level of 35 (Magic Might 10, 5 Body Levels). It costs 7 pawns of vis.
- Binding a stag of virtue has a level of 70 (Magic Might 25, 9 Body Levels). It costs 14 pawns of vis.
- Binding a Tatzlwurm (a dragon) has a level of 95 (Magic Might 40, 11 Body Levels). It costs 19 pawns of vis.

The familiar binding gives both the magus and the familiar the +1 virtue True Friend, relating to the other half of the partnership. Thus, they also gain personality traits of Loyal (partner) +3.

The familiar will not die of old age as long as the magus is alive, and it only suffers ill effects from aging when the magus does. It gains human intelligence, with a score equal to that of the magus, and scores equal to the magus in any languages. Any familiar can understand the languages understood by its master, and can speak them if it has the relevant vocal equipment. Familiars can



learn abilities in the same way as humans. They cannot, however, learn magic.

The magus and the familiar are magically linked. Each serves as an Arcane Connection to the other. Neither needs to overcome the other's magic resistance in order to affect them with a spell or magical ability.

When the bond has been created, the magus and familiar both gain a score of one in the ability Familiar. This ability can only be increased by granting familiar powers, and has effects as described below.

Both the familiar and the magus retain any abilities that they had before the ritual was performed.

Familiar Powers

A maga may, at any time, grant powers to her familiar. This is a laboratory activity, and the rules are the same as those for investing a power in a lesser enchanted device, with five exceptions.

- First, there is no limit to the number of powers which may be invested in a familiar.
- Second, the maga gets no bonus to the lab total from other effects already invested in the familiar. Instead, she gets +5 if the effect matches either the technique or form used to bind the familiar, and +10 if it matches both.
- Third, the maga may invest any number of powers in a season, provided that they are all of the same technique and form and their levels add to less than or equal to half her lab total.
- Fourth, powers are limited to effects which target the maga, the familiar, or both.
- Finally, Verditiis Magic does not add to the lab total.

If the enchantment affects only the maga, it is under the control of the familiar. If it affects only the familiar, it is under the control of the maga. For the use of effects enchanted into the familiar bond, the maga and familiar are always considered to be touching one another.

The enchantment is applied to both the maga and the familiar, so effects restricted to the maga, the familiar, or both, benefit from having their final level divided by two. Such effects must be based on the forms of Animal, Corpus, or Mentem. Other powers may be invested, if they target only the maga or the familiar, but they do not get this bonus. Affinities that cover the familiar apply to the investment of all powers, no matter what they do. Affinities that cover the power apply as normal.

Every pawn of vis used in investing a power counts as an experience point to raise the Familiar abilities of both the maga and familiar.

Example Powers

Speech: Giving an animal the ability to form human speech is Muto Animal, level 20 (a minor change that makes the animal unnatural). The

duration can be dropped to Concentration, and the bond enchanted to maintain concentration, for no net change. Adding ten levels allows the maga to do this an unlimited number of times. The final level is 30, which divides to 15.

Mental communication: Two effects, one allowing each partner to communicate with the other. The effect is *Creo Mentem*, as one partner is creating things in the mind of the other. If only words can be transmitted, the level is five, plus ten for unlimited use, which is 15, divided to 8. If more complex thoughts, such as images and emotions, can be transmitted, then the base level is ten, plus ten for unlimited use, dividing to 10.

Shapechanging: The most efficient way to get controllable changes is to drop the duration of the spell to Concentration, and then enhance the effect so that the device maintains concentration. To change the familiar into a human, the effect is *Muto Animal* with a *Corpus* requisite, and the base level is 25. The duration modifiers do not change this, so it divides by two for a total of 13. Unlimited uses raise the final level to 18. The level required to transform the maga into the form of her familiar varies. Both can also take on other forms, if the appropriate powers are invested.

Shared Senses: Looking through the other's eyes or hearing through their ears is an *Intellego Mentem* effect. The base level to share a single sense is twenty (by analogy from the guidelines), and that is already at Touch range. Add five levels to raise the duration to Concentration, and another five so that the bond maintains the effect. The final level is thirty, divided by two to fifteen, or 40, divided to 20, if unlimited uses are allowed.

Location: The level to find the partner is 15, divided to 8. This is *Intellego Corpus* to find the maga, and *Intellego Animal* to find the familiar.

Healing: The effect is level 20, either *Creo Corpus* or *Creo Animal*, to heal one body level. +3 levels to allow the duration to be boosted with vis, and +5 to allow 24 uses per day (how many wounds are you likely to take?), for a final level of 28, which divides to 14. Note that the effect still requires four pawns of vis to boost it to Instant duration.

Aura of Fire: Wreath the maga or familiar in flames, which do not burn her but do burn anything that comes within them. This is creating flame in an unnatural shape, so the fire does damage equal to level - 5. The Arts are *Creo Ignem*, with a *Rego* requisite. +5 levels to raise the duration to Diameter, -10 levels to drop the range to Touch, +10 for Unlimited Uses. Final level is damage + 10, which does not divide.

Razor-sharp steel claws: The base level is 15, to create a small amount of metal. This drops to 5 because of the reduced range. The duration can be altered to Concentration, and then boosted so that the item maintains concentration, for no net change. Because the claws are supposed to be

magically sharp, the level is raised by five. Add ten levels so that the effect can be invoked at will, for a final level of 20. This does not divide, as the effect is *Terram*. The claws give +5 damage to all attacks with them.

Protection from weapons: To deflect all attacks from wooden weapons, on one of the maga or the familiar, the base level is 25. Add five levels for Constant Effect, taking it to 30. This does not divide.

Familiar Abilities

The Familiar ability has a number of effects. First, it may be used as a normal ability when rolling to understand the behaviour of individuals of the familiar's species, or be used by the familiar to understand humans. As a guideline, assume that all human beings have a base score of 6 in understanding people, and that *Folk Ken* adds to that. Thus, a raven with Familiar 9 is as good at understanding people as a human being with *Folk Ken* 3. A raven with Familiar 1 will miss just about every social cue going. In theory, a familiar could become incredibly good at understanding people, but that would require the magus to invest about a thousand levels of powers. The magus gains a similar level of understanding of the familiar's species.

Second, for every level in Familiar, the magus and familiar each gain one behavioural, personality or physical quirk of the other. Thus, a magus with a cat familiar might acquire a tendency to sit in the sun, one with an owl might tend towards being nocturnal, and one with a fox might gain red hair. *The Medieval Bestiary, Revised Edition* can provide further ideas on what these traits might be, as they should be appropriate to Mythic Europe. A magus or familiar may choose to increase the intensity of an existing quirk rather than gaining a new one, but they should be encouraged to gain a number of quirks first. These quirks are merely for characterisation, and are not flaws. Thus, the player may ignore mental or behavioural quirks if it would be inconvenient for the magus to be governed by them at a certain point.

Extended Example

Showoffica of Flambeau wants to bind a really impressive familiar. She decides on a *Tatzlwurm*, as a fire-breathing dragon seems appropriate. She finds one, Sparky, and entices him back to her lab. There follows some messing about with windows, platforms, and canopies, because Sparky won't actually fit in the building. Showoffica manages a *Creo Ignem* lab total of 95, and Sparky is bound. Everyone is really, really impressed.

First, she grants both herself and Sparky the ability to create thoughts in the other's mind, so that they can communicate. Each effect is level 10 (see above), and her *Creo Mentem* lab total is 45, so she can grant both of the powers in a single session.





Next, Sparky decides that he wants to be able to turn into a human being, so that he can fit inside Showoffica's laboratory. This is level 18, but Showoffica only has a Muto Animal lab total of 30. (What use is Animal?) Sparky sulks for a season, Showoffica learns some more Animal, and with a lab total of 36 she grants the power. Never underestimate the power of a sulking dragon. Especially when it can project the sulk directly into your mind.

After this, Showoffica decides that she wants to be able to turn into a Tatzlwurm, like Sparky. Her player tells the storyguide that this has a base level of 25, and so should be a level 18 effect. The storyguide tells the player that Tatzlwurms are not land animals, and sets the base level at 50. He says that there are Vim and Ignem requisites, as well as Animal. Showoffica's player sulks for a season, but sulking players are much less effective than sulking dragons. Showoffica can't manage the Muto Corpus lab total of 60 which is required for this effect, so she, reluctantly, shelves the plan for a later date.

Instead, Showoffica decides to make Sparky's breath hotter. At the moment, it does +35 damage, and she wants to raise the damage to +50. At first, the storyguide rules that this is Muto Ignem, but after some wheedling he is persuaded to allow it to be Creo Ignem. He sets the level at 50, since Sparky can already breathe fire. 10 levels must be added to this for unlimited uses. Showoffica has a Creo Ignem lab total of 110 (because she's an example, and thus gets whatever stats I want), to which she gets a +10 bonus because she bound Sparky using Creo and Ignem. Thus, she can grant the power. Sparky now vapourises trees when he sneezes, as long as he asks Showoffica first.

Impressed by this, she decides that she wants to breathe fire herself. She thinks that this is Creo Ignem as well, but the storyguide rules that, in order to be affecting Showoffica, and thus some-

thing that can be invested in the familiar bond, this needs to be Muto Corpus with a Creo Ignem requisite. Showoffica's player sulks again, but Showoffica can manage a Muto Corpus lab total of 40, so she settles for a level 20 effect. The storyguide decides that the breath does +20 damage: it is Touch range (it starts at her mouth), Concentration duration (it keeps going as long as she blows), and Individual target (it's quite a big flame). Showoffica grants the power, and now she can breathe flame whenever Sparky lets her.

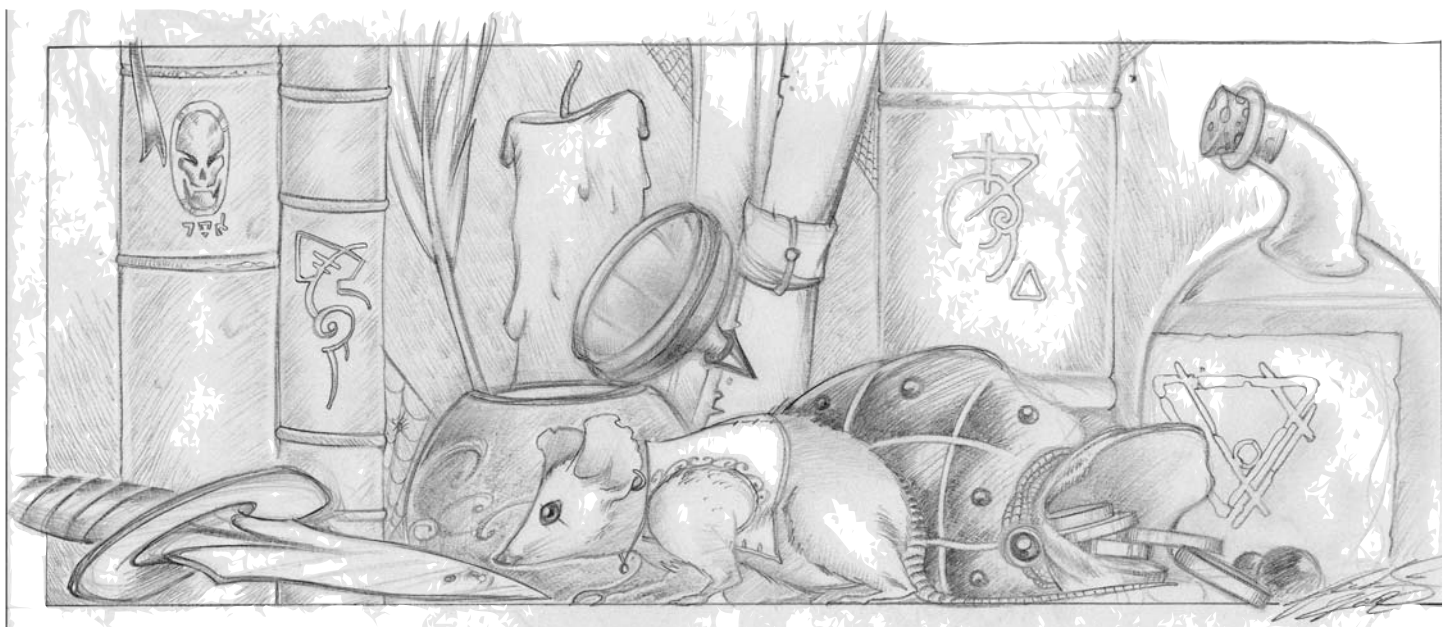
Parhedroi

Hermetic Theurgists can bind Parhedroi as familiars. These are spirits rather than animals. To do so, the maga needs the +2 virtue Parhedros, as described in *The Mysteries*. These rules completely change the procedure for binding Parhedroi as they do for normal familiars, however.

The ritual to summon and bind a Parhedros takes a season. The maga must sacrifice Vim vis to the spirit to give it substance. She may sacrifice any number of pawns of vis up to the normal Vim + Magic Theory limit, and the summoned spirit has a Magic Might equal to the number of pawns sacrificed. The Parhedros ritual automatically draws vis from the aura, as if the maga had spent the season extracting vis according to the normal rules. This vis must be sacrificed to the Parhedros, but other vis may be added.

A newly bound Parhedros is linked to the maga in the same way as an animal familiar, except that no Familiar ability is gained. Further, the Parhedros and maga may communicate mentally at any range, as long as they are not separated by regio boundaries or magical wards.

A Parhedros can be granted powers in the same way as any other familiar, and Theurgy always applies as a bonus to the Lab Total. In addition, there are certain powers which can only be granted to a Parhedros.



Parhedroi can learn the Hermetic Arts, but only from their maga. Before a Parhedros can learn an Art, the Art must be opened. Opening an Art is the same as granting a power with a level equal to (number of open Arts +1) × 5. Thus, opening the first Art has a level of five, while opening the tenth has a level of fifty. This level is not divided by two because it applies only to the Parhedros. When opening a Technique, the lab total is based on that Technique and Vim. When opening a Form, the lab total is based on that Form and Creo. A Parhedros with open Arts can use them as described in *The Mysteries*, pages 131-2.

The maga can grant increased Characteristics to the Parhedros. This effect is Creo Mentem for Intelligence, Perception, and Communication, and Creo Corpus for the others. The level of the effect (which, again, is not divided by two) is fifteen times the characteristic to be granted. Note that

this grants a characteristic value, not a bonus, so it is not possible to give the Parhedros +3 Intelligence by granting +1 Intelligence three times. The Parhedros can use physical Characteristics as described under Shared Force, *The Mysteries*, page 130. Treat the Hekate Bond, for these purposes, as another physical characteristic, granted according to these rules.

Finally, the maga may spend a season to increase the Magic Might of her Parhedros. This costs one pawn of Vim vis for every point of increase to Magic Might, with an overall limit of Int + Magic Theory + Creo + Vim + Theurgy + aura. She cannot sacrifice more than Vim + Magic Theory pawns in a single season, and does not get the benefit of free vis distillation, in contrast to the initial binding.

Thanks to Neil Taylor and Sheila Thomas for feedback on earlier versions of these rules.



Publisher's corner

Hello!

Who said *Ars Magica* is a dead game? As you certainly already know, David Chart is the new line editor of our beloved game. And he will produce four supplements! But even before the release of the first, we should see Timothy Ferguson's *Sanctuary of Ice*, the *Tribunal of the Greater Alps* and Michaël de Verteuil's *Bishop's Staff* (an adventure).

But right now, you can appreciate the ideas of the fine people who also took the time to write for *Hermes' Portal*.

This issue is quite focused: two articles on familiars and two articles on Mysteries and Secret Societies.

First, David proposes new rules for binding of a familiar, while Timothy gives us twenty reasons to explain why Bjornaers don't bind familiars.

You'll just have to pick the one that best suits your saga!

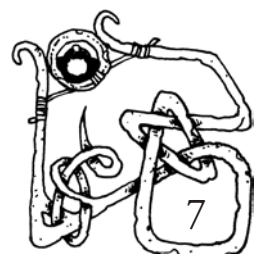
Then, after his take on Bjornaers' Mysteries, Erik Dahl is now having a look at the pious magi while Angus MacDonald is trying to reconcile Houses and Secret Societies.

Of course, you'll also find the regular columns: "Dear Abelard" and "Heretic's Corner". Again, don't hesitate to send your questions to the authors — if they are published (and why shouldn't they be?) you'll receive a free copy of *Hermes' Portal*.

Last, I hope you're working hard for the scenario contest. I changed the deadline — now you have until May 31 to send your stories.

As we say in French, "Jamais deux sans trois!" And soon, a fourth!

Eric





Why Don't Bjornaer Magi Bind Familiars?

by Timothy Ferguson

There's something different about Bjornaer magi: that's the reason they're such fun to play. Earlier works always make clear that this house is unlike the Roman houses, but never quite detail how. Why they differ is hinted at. We are told they are Germanic, then Russian. We are told they gather from across Europe to perform pre-Hermetic rituals. We are told that they derive from an earlier tradition, now hostile and vengeful. Storyguides build upon these foundations, and characters are given the opportunity to explore an alien society which accepts them as a member.

Characters from this house are a joy to play because Bjornaer has unresolved mysteries at its core. This article can't give you the definitive reason why Bjornaer magi lack familiars, because to present a final answer would rob the house of much of its charm. The best way of keeping the house's secrets alive is to tailor them to each saga, so the best answer to "Why haven't they any familiars?" is "Well, it might be...". The article suggests twenty possibilities.

Storyguides should alter the value of the Bjornaer virtue package depending on which of these options they choose. Since each option contains variants and spells which the storyguide may disallow, no suggested package values have been given. Decide them for yourself, but try not to be so stingy that your players refuse to take a Bjornaer magus. Emphasise that they are paying more than usual because their house will teach them novel, powerful — and fun — things at a later stage. Try selling Bjornaerhood as a cheaper version of the Latent Magical Ability virtue.

Missing persons

The familiar ritual has Permanent duration and lapses when its magic is unable to locate both targets. The ritual cannot detect the Hidden human Shape of a Bjornaer in heartshape form. When the magus takes heartshape, the Hermetic ritual cannot identify the human partner any longer, and so the bonds snap.

This solution is the blandest, which makes it the most easily adapted to any saga. It's also useful as the cover story used by the Bjornaer when one of the other suggestions is correct within your saga.

Blood of the Beast

The ritual which creates familiars assumes one party to be Merinita, and the other to be her stag. Although the design can be altered a little, to designate another magus and animal as targets, the design assumption, that one target be a human (Corpus) and the other a beast (Animal) is



inflexible. Bjornaer magi are often the descendants of human-animal pairings in the distant past, and this confuses the ritual so that it fails to distinguish targets, so bonds cannot form. Ancient cross-breeding may also account for the handful of non-Bjornaer magi who cannot take familiars.

It is possible, if this is the case, that transfusion is a necessary component of training that develops additional shapes. Given that blood can be kept fresh magically, and that some Bjornaer have mixed ancestry, the house meeting may include trade in and ceremonial use of sanguinary fluid. This provides a new class of treasure for Bjornaer magi. To restrict the availability of suitable blood, the storyguide may limit suitable donors to beasts of virtue, as described in *Hedge Magic*, to paragons of their species, to shapechangers, or to those whose blood contains vis.

New spell

The Garnets of Bjornaer

Mu An (Te) 20

R: Touch, D: Sun/Permanent, T: Small

Spell Focus: A garnet (+5)

These spells change animal blood into gemstones, which are usually carmine red. The spell's Permanent duration allows the blood to be returned to its natural state. This permits fresh blood to be stored and transported without decaying. The Garnets of Bjornaer can incorporate an identifying symbol within the stone, using an Imaginem requisite. Alternatively, with a finesse roll of 9+ the blood can be shaped into a miniature statuette.

Breeding Pool

In a related idea, the House may agitate against familiars because it undercuts Bjornaer's future. If Hermetic magi are descended from ancient animal-human pairings (as per the *Medieval Bestiary*) then they may require magical animals interacting with human populations to maintain their apprentice pool. If familiars are made sterile by the ritual when it extends their lifespans, then, in the long term, it may deplete the shapeshifting population of Europe.

Domestication

The word "familiar" derives from the Latin for "servant". Magi who feel that they are truly animals may find the idea of employing animal servants offensive because this forces the magus to assume a human role — the master. Familiarisation is a form of domestication, and domesticating an animal then binding it also domesticates and binds the magus. It anchors them to the power-relationships of human society. This, in turn, prevents them from developing closer links to their animal nature, as represented by an increasing Will Over Form score.

Even binding an animal of your own species is an assumption of the human role of master, because of the way the bonds work. The familiar

is bound through human means, rather than through instinct and intimidation, as would be natural for the magus's species. There are a few exceptional species, such as dogs, which prefer domestication, and it's not impossible for a Bjornaer magus to have a domestic animal as their heartshape, but when this occurs, they should be trying to find a human master to serve. Binding that master is letting the horse ride the jockey, and again draws them away from their heartshape.

Could a magus of another House bind a willing Bjornaer with a domestic animal heartshape as a familiar? Possibly... ask your storyguide. Since magi have no method of determining the presence of the human shape, a domestic Bjornaer may hide as a familiar for years. Given that a familiar learns what their master does, loss of study may affect them only mildly.

New spells

Lest They Know Us In Our Solitude

Cr Im 25

R: Touch, D: Permanent, T: Group

Spell Focus: Fool's gold (+2), tin (+2) or cobalt (+2) or all together (+6)

This spell creates illusory cords between a Bjornaer magus and an animal, or between two Bjornaer magi. Its provenance is unclear, but it appears to have been developed to allow Bjornaer magi to hide within another House of the Order.

The Bridle Breaks and the Yoke is Put Aside

Cr An 35

R: Touch, D: Sun/Instant, T: Individual

Spell Focus: A horse's bit (broken during use)

The precise operation of this spell is unclear. Bjornaer claim that it heals the broken will of animals that have been domesticated. Other magi suggest it creates behaviour patterns which the magus desires. That the spell uses creative rather than manipulative prowess is deliberate. The spell creates the capacity for wildness, yet does not compel it, allowing the liberated animal to act as would be natural for an undomesticated member of its species in its situation.

Species that have been selectively bred for domestic use, such as sheep and dogs, are immune to this spell. Animals so thoroughly abused that no spark of resistance remains within them are similarly unliberatable, much like human slaves whose Confidence has been reduced to zero.

The Answer Which Is Not An Answer

It may be that there is no magical difficulty in a Bjornaer taking a familiar, but they refuse to do so simply because it's not considered appropriate behaviour. This constraint may have a sound basis, and ideas for what that might be are given in some of the later paragraphs. It might also simply descend from house members modelling their lives on Bjornaer's. That is, there may be no objec-

tive reason why Bjornaer magi refuse to take familiars, they simply don't.

In Mythic Europe cultural inertia is a potent force. The new and novel are celebrated in our culture, but were often considered inferior copies of Roman and Greek models by the Mythic Europeans. Although social pressures are justified by the societies which enforce them, they need not be based on an objective threat or benefit. The nature of this social pressure will vary by saga, but, for example, would usually include a desire not to shame your branch of the family, to be seen as perverse, or considered unwise.

Bjornaer social pressure is far less genteel than other magi might expect, because animals are less friendly than many players imagine. House Bjornaer relishes a natural lifestyle, meaning that civilized values, like mercy, are foreign to many of its members. Compassion simply doesn't make sense to the average wolf, and may be seen by senior magi as a human vice. Similar "civilized" traits may be considered moral weaknesses, or spiritual flaws which the enlightened purge by drawing closer to their true selves, as represented by their heartshapes. A younger magus attempting to overthrow the House philosophy is a danger, and may well be killed as dispassionately as a litter of cubs from a non-dominant bitch. On the most superficial level, Bjornaer may not take familiars simply because their elders tell them not to.

New spell

Consultation with One's Elders

In Me (An) 55

R: Sight/Arcane, D: Sun, T: Ind

This spell allows telepathic communication with the target. Arcane connections are usually exchanged or renewed during the Gathering of Twelve Years to allow this spell to be effective over large distances. Generally the communicatee is the caster's master. By tradition, this spell is used at the first hour of the night of the full moon, although masters with several filii may arrange separate contact times for each. A ritual form of this spell, *Communion Between Masters and Filii*, is of 60th level and allows communication between a group of magi. These are usually a parens and their filii, but is occasionally a grandparents and their descendants.

The Wolf Madonna

When the Bjornaer gather they worship something; something that's ordered them not to take familiars, since it would interfere with their devotions. When Russia was being Christianized, one of its saints slaughtered bears, to cast out the pagan forces of the land. What if one of those spirits hid within Bjornaer, bear on the inside but human on the outside, as she fled to the West? Centuries of worship have strengthened this spirit, so that she is somehow linked to each of her acolytes. Since the magi are her familiars, her servants, they cannot, in





turn bind animals. Perhaps binding animals anchors them spiritually in a way she finds unpleasant.

If this option is selected, then the storyguide should consider what sort of spirit the Bjournaer revere, and what it desires, beyond survival and worship.

The spirit's connection to each Bjournaer magus should be defined. How direct is her connection to each of her acolytes? Can it give instructions and advice? Can it sense what they do? Can it take material form? Is it bound to Crintera? How can it be summoned elsewhere? Do all Bjournaer know about the spirit, or is the house a mystery cult? If it is, what are younger Bjournaer told, and how do they demonstrate readiness for the next degree of illumination?

New spell

The Teeth of the Wolf Madonna

Mu An (Vi) 40, Ritual

Note that the Wolf Madonna is never referred to when outsiders might overhear. Among other magi, and when written, this spell is called "That Our Teeth May The Necks of Our Enemies Rend". It is usually taught at the sixtieth level to Bjournaer who have demonstrated their loyalty to the House and the Mother, and is used most effectively by groups.

This spell modifies the natural weaponry of the Bjournaer, in animal form, so that it can damage magical creatures and energy forms. A blow enhanced by this spell

- acts as a general *Eternal Oblivion* spell of 10th level.
- ablates away 4 Might when it fails to overcome Resistance
- ablates away 8 points of Parma Magica
- acts as a 10th level *Perdo Vim* spell (similar to *Wind of Mundane Silence*)
- ablates energy from spells. As a guide, reduces a spell's level for resistance by eight. Instant and Momentary spells can't be chewed on, since they disappear too quickly, and Permanent spells repair themselves at magnitude points per round.

Higher level versions of this spell are increasingly damaging. For every four levels, add one point to the *Eternal Oblivion* and *Mundane Silence* effects. For each magnitude add one point to the levels of the Parma and spell ablation effects.

Note this ritual provides no defence against the natural attacks of the creature assailed. For example, a Bjournaer wolf can use this spell to chew into minor fire elementals, but will still suffer burns.

The Shapes of the Founder

Familiars may be forbidden because they prevent the character growing in a way that the house considers laudable. Imagine a house where, at Bjournaer's death, she bequeathed parts of herself

to her followers. Bjournaer's shapes may still be around, passed down to her descendants, each one containing a fragment of her personality. In such a House, the Great Bear who convened each Gathering would always be the same shape, carrying the wisdom of centuries. The Raven sent to deal with those who would betray the house may always be the same raven. Familiars may bind a magus into his lifestyle, so that they are unable to accept an ancestral shape. Since the Shapes' selection criteria for hosts are unclear, all magi are expected to make themselves available for the honour of possession.

New spell

Beckon Our Ancientmost Protectors

CrVi 50

R: Near D: Momentary T: Individual

This spell creates pulses of concentrated magical force. They surge repeatedly outward, creating viscous waves in the field of vis that coats the Earth. Although this has no obviously useful effect, among members of the house, it is a pre-arranged signal. Bjournaer's shapes can sense the direction from which the wave has come, and can use simple spells to determine the position of the epicenter, based on triangulation. This ritual is used only when other means of communication are blocked and a matter of absolute urgency has arisen.

When the Shapes sense the spell, they detach from their hosts and swarm toward the Beckoning locus. Humans in the area may manifest one or more of Bjournaer's forms while her shapes grapple with the problem, and, in extreme instances, Bjournaer's shapes all possess the spellcaster, briefly reconstituting the Founder. This process causes the caster to suffer Twilight when the spell ends and the shapes return to their preferred bearers.

Spirits are often curious about the epicenter of the waves, and may infest the area for years afterward, as they arrive from far-distant places.

The Mentors

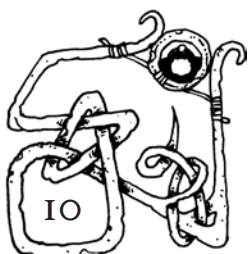
Bjournaer who have forsaken the human shape may hold a special role in the house, as proselytizers. The Bjournaer may encourage the animal versions of their eldest and wisest to enter friendly relationships with magi of other Houses. The Magical Animal Companions of many apprentices are likely Bjournaer magi who have escaped Twilight by forsaking anthropomorphism. Once returned to sentience they exert a subtle influence that prevents the House from suffering extermination, despite being unRoman and secretive, the "crimes" of Diedne. Familiar links are easily detectable, and would prevent the placement of mentors.

New spell

Sommambulism

Re Me (Co) 55

R: Near, D: Sun, T: Individual



Spell Focus: Hermetic familiar cords linking caster to target (+10)

This difficult spell combines two powerful effects. First, it takes control of the victim's mind, then it appropriates control of their body. Alone these spells are tricky and their use together would be extremely problematic if the Hermetic cords did not act as perfect conduits of control.

The spell implants the desire to repeat a magical formula, then the limbs are controlled to ensure that the gestures made are correct. This spell is usually cast on those who are asleep, and is followed by a Pe Me effect such as *Loss of but a Moment's Memory*. It's difficult to notice that one's recollection of getting up and casting a spell, for no reason in the middle of the night, is absent.

Simpler forms of this technique are available. It's possible to do the same sort of thing with a Re Me 30 effect, but the unpractised magus is more likely to fumble their gestures (spellcasting rolls at -5). Also, this version uses the art scores of the victim, not their puppeteer.

The Deluded

The reason that Bjornaer can't have familiars is because they have them already. Each Bjornaer is bound to an animal spirit in the Magical Realm. When they "shift shape" they steal this creature's body and store their own in the Magic Realm. As juvenile Bjornaer are not given instruction in this theory, most truly believe that they take an animal shape. When Bjornaer enter Final Twilight, they remain trapped in the Land of Spirits, as described in *Shamans*, while their animal spirit is released into the mortal world. Bjornaer with additional training may be able to call forth their animal spirit without taking its place in the Magical Realm, for example by summoning it into a fetish.

New spell

Spirit Guide

CrVi (Re) (Special), Ritual (Non Hermetic)

R: Touch, D: Ring, T: Small

Spell Focus: The skull of the guide's species (+5)

This spell calls up the spirit guide of a magus and places it temporarily within a container. The spirit guide has a Might equal to twice the caster's Animal score. Successful casting requires this resistance to be overcome. The magus can then freely converse with the creature along the mystical connection which would usually allow shapeshifting. The more skilled a magus becomes in the art of Animal, the more potent his spirit guide becomes. With power comes status in the spirit world, and with status comes ease, information, reflection and wisdom.

Most spirit guides, of Bjornaer mature enough to have been taught the ritual, are wise in the ways of their species. Unless a metaphorical parallel can be used they are not able to give advice on mortal matters, which they usually find confusing. Wolves,

for example, will offer advice by starting stories with phrases like "When I wanted to be alpha wolf...", "When I sought out a bitch with which to build a den..." and "There was this potent buck I wished to catch..." Much of the time this is an extremely complicated way to borrow the Common Sense virtue of a particularly wise creature.

The Spirit Guide can teach the magus how to increase their Animal personality trait and Will Over Form ability, using Training techniques.

The Flight from Twilight

Many Bjornaer escape Twilight by transforming into a magical, but unintelligent, member of their heartshape's species. Linking oneself to a familiar may prevent this occurring, by tying them to Hermetic magic's source of power. The Void must be unspeakably dull for a Bjornaer magus. Bjornaer may not take familiars because it damns them to an eternity of tedious nothingness.

New spell

Damnation to an Eternity of Tedious Nothingness

Cr Vi 35

R: Sight, D: Sun/Permanent, T: Ind

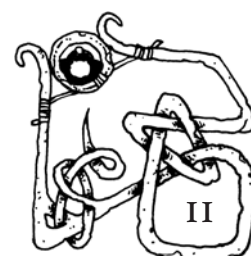
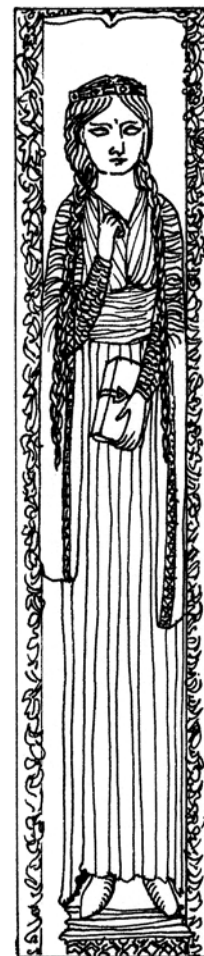
This spell creates a ring of coherent magical energy which wraps around the target magus. Although it has no effect in the short term, if the magus faces Final Twilight with the ring still in place, they are unable to shelter in their animal forms. They are instead projected into the Void.

Bjornaer magi have made sure no-one outside their House is aware of the existence of this spell. It is reserved for judicial use, when recalcitrants are forced to wear the ring for a time, where the condemned are burdened with it and then slain, or for battle with the shapeshifting tradition which Bjornaer betrayed.

The Sacred State

The familiar is the lifelong soulmate of the magus, fulfilling many of the emotional roles of a spouse. If the Bjornaer practice arranged marriage, then familiar links may add a jealous third party, or may prevent a magus forming an adequate pair-bond with the mate selected by their elders. Strong social pressure may be exerted to prevent the formation of familiar bonds if they are seen to compromise the house's interest in a couple's welfare. Familiars may be seen as a danger to "family values".

If House Bjornaer practices arranged marriage, it makes the Gatherings of Twelve Years between Gauntlet and Potion vital for the magus's happiness. If two meetings occur in that brief span they will be assessed at the first and married at the second. If they have the misfortune to have only one Gathering between adulthood and impotence, they, and their equally desperate age-mates, must chase spouses hectically for the length of the meeting. It's possible, however, that structures exist to ensure the right buck meets the right doe.





Bjornaer cannot be unaware of the value of selective breeding. It's possible that magi with certain affinities are deliberately paired, in the hope that a strain of magus can be bred in which the Gift runs true. If this is the case, then the Bjornaer will be more interested than the usual magus in the affinities of magical children whom they encounter. The house may determine that certain flavours of Gift will make useful contributions to the family project in twenty years, or that a gender imbalance has occurred, so that more children of a certain gender and talent are required.

New spells

Sense the Waxing of the Inner Tide

In Co 5

R: Personal, D: Momentary, T: Individual

Allows a Bjornaer maga to sense when her optimum breeding period is in human form. In animal form, she almost certainly knows this anyway, but if her species doesn't have a period of heat, the equivalent is an In An spell of level 4.

Determining the Day

In Co 5

R: Personal, D: Momentary, T: Individual

Allows a Bjornaer maga to accurately predict when her term of pregnancy would naturally end. In animal form an equivalent spell is In An 4.

Prosthetic Shapeshifting

Bjornaer magi may consider familiars a prosthesis. As such, taking a familiar may be considered an admission of weakness. This belief may have come about due to an early demonstration of the shapechange bond quality, where Merinita borrowed the form of her stag. Bjornaer could have pointed out that although this had carried Merinita a little further along the true path, it required the presence of an animal as assistant, and was therefore suitable only for those whose limitations were grave.

New spell

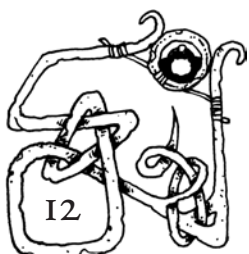
Altering the Prosthesis of the Unilluminated Magus

Mu An 70 *, Ritual (Non Hermetic, Bjornaer only)

R: Touch, D: Instant, T: Individual

* Requires requisites if final form is other than Animal.

This ritual utilizes that portion of Bjornaer tradition which allows alteration of essential nature, as reflected by the "Hidden Shape" virtue, without breaching the Hermetic Limit of True Nature. It assigns a new shape to an animal, making its previous species undetectable using Hermetic magic. Although this has few apparent applications, it does allow a magus using the shapechange bond quality to utilize the new shape, although they lose the capacity to transform into the animal's previous species. With appropriate requisites this ritual can alter an animal into a natural object, allowing the magus to simulate inanimate heartshapes.



False Revelation

To extend the idea of prosthetics further, it may be that Bjornaer deemed the use of transferred familiar forms a travesty. Being able to take a familiar's shape may draw one away from one's inner nature. It may prevent the introspection necessary for the discovery of one's lesser shapes. As such, familiarisation is a cul-de-sac which Bjornaer magi may become trapped within, unable to continue their researches into their essential natures.

New spell

Wean Our Cousins From the Bilious Milk of Heretical Practices

Pe Vi (Me) 35

R: Near/Sight, D: Vim component: Inst. Mentem component: Sun/Moon, T: Individual

Spell focus: a sharp sliver of sapphire (+2)

Wean, as the spell's name is usually abbreviated, is little used in the modern House, now that the heresy of familiarisation has been revealed in the completeness of its error. For a brief period, however, the enlightened strove to sever the addictive bonds that chained their kin to the animals upon which they had become dependant. This formula is an artefact of that time, perhaps of greater interest to the historian than the modern magus, despite its occasional combat utility.

This spell slices through the familiar cords, severing the bonds and thereby dispelling the transferred shape bond quality. It also contains a Mentem requisite, which is directed toward the magus to prevent them from feeling grief at the loss of the cords. This provides a brief period in which their caring family can explain the crippling nature of the ritual of familiarisation to them.

A similar spell, developed later and usually known by the same name, replaces the Mentem requisite with a complete Cr Me effect, similar to *The Gift of Reason*. It is this version which, along with *Aura of Rightful Authority*, and a spell which permits animals to converse, was placed in the Collars of the Unfettered, magic items borne by those senior magi whose task was to wean their misguided cousins. The Collars of the Unfettered also change size as the Bjornaer shifts shape. Since they have other, quite useful enchantments, Unfettering Collars are still prized within the House.

The Ancestress

Bjornaer could never master fire magic, and this flaw has travelled through her descendants. The Hermetic Ritual of Familiarisation requires the brief use of magical fire. That Bjornaer's fire deficiency was the cause of her house's inability to have familiars has been forgotten. In part this is because the use of fire, the great civilizing tool of primitive man, is considered disgusting in this House.

Talismanic Animals

Since magi of Bjornaer are unable to bind familiars, they sometimes create talismans from living animals. These creatures have many of the advantages of familiars, although they lack bond qualities and extended lifespans. It's possible to create a longevity formula for an animal using the same mechanics as those for humans, substituting the Animal form for Corpus. Creatures with Magic Might are rarely chosen as talismanic animals, as they resist enchantment, subtracting their might from all lab totals.

For enchantment opening calculations, flesh has a base score of 2 and animals usually lie between $\times 3$ (skull) and $\times 5$ (human to small room) size. It's possible to separately enchant portions of animals, but that's beyond the scope of this article, and should be discussed with your storyguide. It's also possible to implant magic items onto animals, or give them magical tattoos, although these items are created as normal invested or lesser enchanted devices.

A talismanic animal has all the usual benefits of talismanhood, including magic resistance, arcane connection and increased touch range. Talismanic animals can be attuned to effects. As they are always connected to the magus, it's common among Bjornaer to invest healing spells in their talismanic animals and get them to carry little sacks of vis. Note that a talismanic animal which has

died often remains a talisman while its corpse is fresh. It's usual to resuscitate such animals or preserve them using Cr An magic.

The Transfer of Shapes

Bjornaer magi may learn new shapes by forming a temporary bond with an older magus. The familiarisation ritual could prevent this occurring. Although this may seem unproblematic for older magi who have already acquired a multitude of shapes, it would prevent them passing these shapes to younger magi. Given the house's emphasis on animal behaviour and opinion, embracing sterility might disgust. Social pressure may indicate that a magus has a duty to remain able to pass on their shapes. A magus making themselves impotent is failing to honour the traditions of the house, by failing in their custodianship of the shapes given them by more responsible ancestors.

Fear of Intimacy

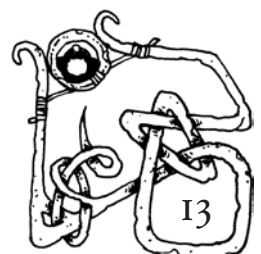
Bjornaer magi are enormously self-centred. Unlike the arrogant magi of other houses, however, their introspection focuses on their inability to do more than that which they are currently able. Since Bjornaer concentrate on themselves to the exclusion of others it is difficult for them to make the bond of mutual respect necessary for familiarity. Even if they could find a partner willing to be ignored, the house belief that magical tools make one weak extends to manipulated animals. Friends are, to some Bjornaer, a style of tool, and therefore a sign of ineptitude.

Hinduism?

A Criamon magus has suggested that Bjornaer magi, to wax Hindu, are magical animals who in a previous life practiced sufficient austerities to be reincarnated into human form. To link to an animal and make it intelligent would grant it the privileges of those with good karma, regardless of their spiritual state. This would lead to them suffering terrible tragedy, as the negative karmic balance induced would strike down the animal. Bjornaer magi have often alluded to this theory, partially because they find it reassuring, confirming that they are truly animals, and because they find the assumption that humanity is their goal humorous. Possibly, they comically retort, animals are too good for them.

The Enemy

Bjornaer magi cannot recognize each other in their heartshapes using magic. This is unfortunate, because it indicates an inability to detect members of the tradition which Bjornaer betrayed by joining the Hermetic Order. The ban on familiars may exist to prevent espionage by these most persistent of enemies. A well-placed mole could disrupt or expose the rituals of Crintera, and seriously compromise the house.





Contamination

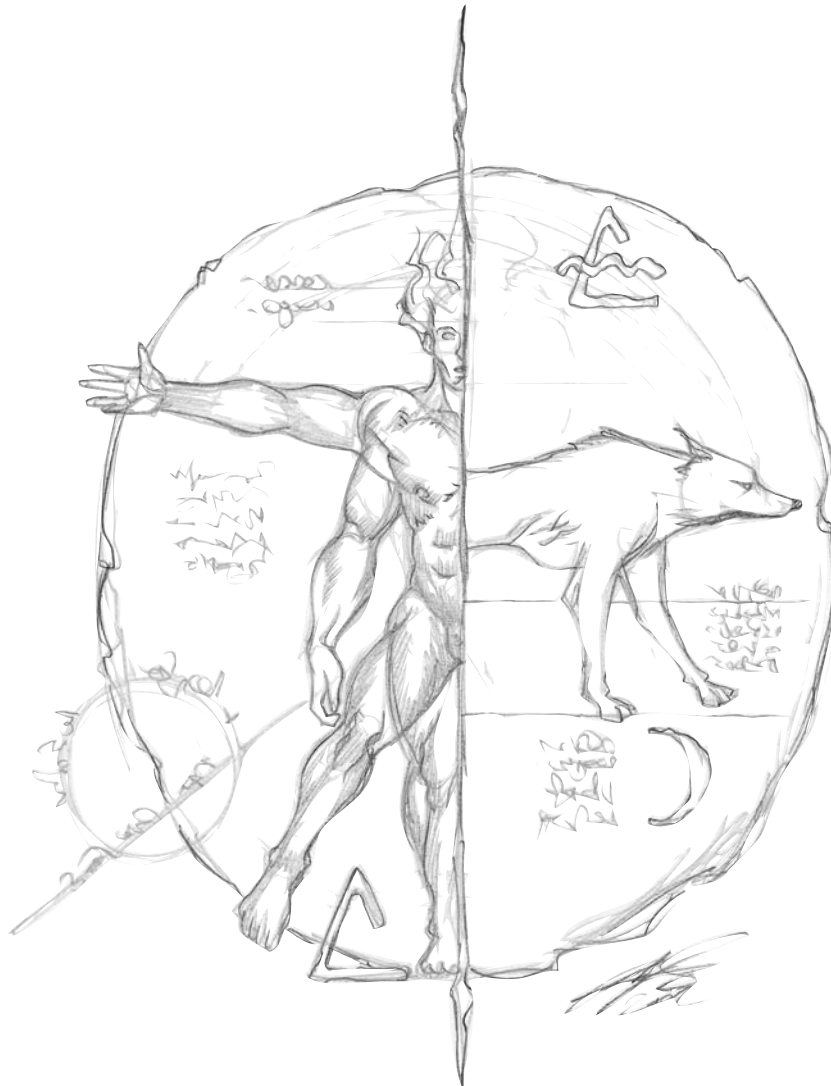
Bjornaer don't take familiars because they fear that Merinita's magic was tainted. Her process is likewise suspect. Differing sagas may suggest different sources for the Merinitan corruption, but these could include:

- All familiar animals are redesigned as minor fae, so that all magi with familiars go to the Arcadian lands. (Quendalon wasn't the first faerie mage. See? They had you fooled!)
- The bonds designate magi as sacrifices to a creature similar to the one that Bjornaer worship.
- The cords attract magical predators or illnesses.
- The cords prevent the Gift passing to one's biological children.
- The cords make one deaf in the ultrasonic range, which the Bjornaer use for silent communication.
- All familiars are easily replaced or possessed by demons, who can ride them through protective magic.
- One does not accrue Twilight points through age (or Vim score, or whatever) unless one's ancestors had familiars.

- The Primus of Merinita's illusions cannot be resisted by anyone with a familiar.
- Familiars must answer any question from the Primus of Merinita truthfully.
- Familiars must follow any order given by the Primus of Merinita.
- The familiar conduits can be used as holes through the Parma Magica by a suitably trained Merinita magus.
- When a magus fades into Twilight his familiar, if it too fades, goes to a particular Arcadian realm, where it can be interrogated, killed and harvested as a vis source.
- Merinita is still alive, but can only continue to exist by remaining in a regio and being fed a steady diet of magically-enriched animals.

Note that these rumours need not be true, merely believed accurate and unverifiable.

An interesting twist is that the followers of Myanar were adopted into the House of Bjornaer, after the skirmishes with Quendalon. Given that Myanar was chosen, successor to successor, as House Merinita's Primus it may be that whatever advantage the poisoned ritual gave that house has passed either to the Primus of Bjornaer or to a hidden line of Myanaran shapeshifters.



The Silver Harp

by Niall Christie

The sunlight streaming through the open shutter woke me up this morning. I rolled over, reaching to put my arm around Estelle. Where she should have been, the blankets and sheets were thrown back and cold. Suddenly I was wide awake, my stomach knotting, and a curse on my lips. Wrenching the bedclothes from me, I leapt out of bed and across the room to the window. Violently I threw back the second shutter, which crashed against the tower wall. I scanned the courtyard below quickly, looking for any sign of her. The smith was hard at work in his forge, black smoke pouring from its chimney pot, and one or two of the grogs were looking up at me, stifling yawns.

"Can I help you, Master?" one of the guards called. He was some twenty feet below me. He looked tired, which was no surprise, as it was barely past dawn. Silently I gave thanks that my window faced east, otherwise I might have been sleeping still, and my Estelle God-only-knew where.

"Have you seen the lady Estelle?" I called to him, suppressing rising dread at what his answer might be.

"No, Master," he replied, his face puzzled.

"Well gather some men and look for her. She must not be allowed to leave the covenant. Use force if necessary!" One advantage of being a magus is that grogs rarely question your orders, however odd they may sound. He touched his forelock and ran off. I hoped it would be enough, but was not willing to take any chances. I turned back into my chamber, reaching for my robes.



The woman walked slowly through the wood, her eyes fixed on the ground. It was a bright, but chilly day at the start of autumn, with a slight breeze that played with the few wisps of black hair that protruded from her hood. She shivered and pulled her cloak closer around her with her right hand, her searching gaze never wavering from the ground. In the other hand she carried a basket, currently half-full of assorted herbs and fungi. She had been wandering the woods for the last two hours, collecting plants for both herself and her husband. When she had announced her intention to go out that morning, he had asked her to look out for one or two more unusual herbs, ingredients for his mysterious experiments, at the same time giving her the usual warning about not straying too far into the wood. She had laughed, kissed him lightly, and skipped out of the room, leaving him to his books and bubbling beakers.

She saw something glitter on the grass and knelt to look closer, pushing the cloak back with her elbows and lifting the hem of her woollen dress to avoid stepping on it. When she looked closer, she saw that it was the grass itself that was

glittering. It caught the light and reflected it as if it was wet, even though it was mid-morning and the dew had evaporated long ago. She touched it, and found it was dry. Looking up, she realised that the path she had been following was gone, and around her the trees loomed like great, dark sentinels. She turned in a full circle, realising that she was lost.



As it was, I found her before the grogs. This was to be expected, since I had some idea of where she was likely to go. She was on the top level of the central watchtower in the west wall of the covenant, looking out at the wood that spread like a rippling green sea to the horizon. At least she had taken the time to put on her dress, although it was scant protection against the cold. I went up behind her and put my cloak around her shoulders. She did not register my presence, her eyes fixed on the trees while she sang wordlessly a barely audible tune, the same lilting, tripping tune she had been singing since the day she got lost in the wood. For the moment I said nothing, merely putting my arms around her and holding her to me.

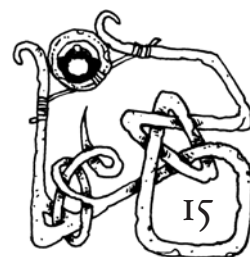
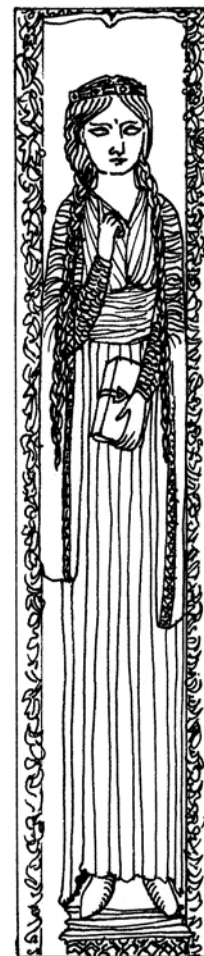


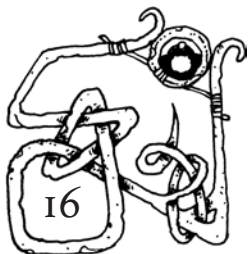
The woman heard a quiet chuckle, and turned to face the figure that had appeared behind her. He was tall and slender, with short, blond hair, an aquiline face and pale skin. His silver eyes were slanted, with something disturbingly feral in them, and his ears were finely pointed. He wore a tunic made of strange, silver cloth and britches of the same material, but his feet were bare. Hanging on a strap from his left shoulder was a silver harp.

"Welcome, Estelle," he said, "You honour me with your visit." His voice was unearthly, something between a tinkling brook and a lively jig. His gaze resting on her was enough to make her blush, her cheeks flaming redder than she had ever known them to before. She knew him for what he was and she was afraid, but unable to tear her gaze away from his.

"Fear not," he said, "I mean you no harm. I would merely spend some time in your company." His eyes spoke of more than pleasant conversation, and she found that this both repelled and fascinated her in the same moment. When he came forward to push the hood away from her hair, she wanted to step back, to flinch away from his touch, but she was rooted to the spot, her hands limp at her sides, the basket having tumbled to the earth. His touch was gentle, but she could feel the animal lust behind it. Sensing her reluctance, he stepped back.

"Does my shape offend you, my dear? Perhaps you would prefer me like this?" As he spoke, his form shifted before her eyes, becoming that of a man closer to her own height, gaunt rather than slim, clad in a simple brown robe. The harpist looked at her with her husband's pale grey eyes, reaching up to brush a wisp of brown hair out of





his face with her husband's gesture. As he stepped forward again she felt panic rise, numbing her senses, but she managed to croak out from a dry throat and parched lips:

"Lord God help me..."



I do not know how long I held her for, but when I eventually moved around in front of her to look her in the face, she continued to ignore my presence. I deliberately blocked her view of the

wood, but she merely moved her head to look over my shoulder, all the time singing that same tune. I took her by the shoulders and shook her, calling her name, but she did not react, her eyes fixed on the trees beyond. Even when I turned her away from the wall and began to walk her back to our chambers, she continued looking back over her shoulder. When the wood dropped out of sight, she struggled briefly in an absent-minded fashion, then acquiesced, all the time staring off into space somewhere ahead of us. I took her back to our room and laid her on the bed. She continued to stare off into nothingness, still singing the tune that had occupied her mind for the last week.

I stood back from the bed and looked down at her. This was the worst I had seen her. When she had first returned from the wood she had been distant, and quietly singing the tune, but she had responded when she was spoken to, only drifting off into her reverie if her attention was not occupied by an external stimulus. Naturally I had noticed the change in her usually lively demeanour, and suspected the faeries of the wood of being responsible. I had attempted, through use of Intellego Mentem magics, to discover more. I began with spells of low magnitude. These were all greeted with the same result, a snippet of the tune I had heard her sing, played out of the empty air on a stringed instrument which I guessed to be a harp. I had attempted spells of higher magnitudes, eventually taking the drastic step of augmenting them with raw vis, but all had been greeted with the same snippet of music. Deeply worried and frustrated, I had consulted other members of the covenant. Naturally, the first person I went to was Talion, the Merinita. He listened to my story, then laughed openly at me.

“You should be pleased, sodalis. It sounds as if your wife has been blessed by a lord of the wood. She is not in obvious pain, so leave her to her music.”

No amount of persuasion, cajoling, threats or bribery would convince Talion to help me, nor was I confident of beating him in Certamen, and so I left him and went to seek help elsewhere. Calliope of Criamon muttered unintelligibly at me about the enigmatic significance of what had happened, and Damocles of Flambeau was characteristically unhelpful, merely suggesting that I should seek out the offending faerie and “charcoal” him. Finally I approached Eloise Ex Miscellanea, a village witch who had joined the Order and the covenant some months ago. She invited me into her chamber, and refused to let me tell my story until she had made sure I was sitting comfortably in a chair by the fire, a steaming goblet of spiced wine at my right hand. Then she eased her aged body into another chair, looked over at me with clear green eyes and bade me begin. I poured out my tale from start to finish, with her gently interrupting me from time to time to clarify a detail here, have me expand on a

reference there, so that by the time I was done, I had given her an account that was much more complete and detailed than that which I had given to Talion. Then she leaned back in her chair and spent some moments deep in thought, her eyes fixed on the fire. At last she stirred, and told me what she thought I must do.



No sooner had the words passed her lips than her husband was gone, and the faerie harpist was towering over her, feral eyes blazing with rage, and his face twisted in an animal snarl.

“You dare mention His name here, with me? You DARE?”

She shrank away in terror, although he had not touched her. She was still unable to command her legs to run, but she tried to be as small and inoffensive as possible to the creature that raged at her. He raised a hand, and she thought he would strike her, but suddenly he was silent, looking at her through eyes which continued to burn with anger. When he spoke his voice was cold.

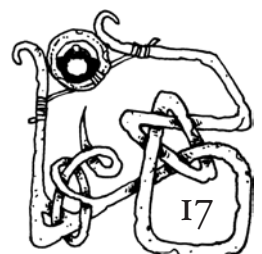
“You do not know it yet, Estelle, but you are mine. No one can keep you from me, not your indifferent God, not your pathetic cantrip-mumbling husband, no one. From now you will think of me and no other. You will not be at ease until you come back to me.”

He reached behind him, taking his harp in his left arm. With the fingers of his right hand he plucked a lilting melody, a tripping jig, which repeated itself over and over. She felt the tune enter her ears, blocking out all other sounds. It danced through her brain and dominated her senses, making it difficult to think clearly. She was enveloped in a thick veil, which obscured her surroundings. Finally the force rooting her to the spot slackened, and she was able to move. She wrenched herself away from the clearing, feeling as if she had left a piece of herself bleeding on the glittering grass, and knowing now that she was truly lost.



I have been putting this off for days, but as time has passed, Estelle has become more and more distant, although this is the first day that she has refused to acknowledge me. No one here can help her, and I am afraid to take her to any of the greater covenants, for fear of what they might want to do to her. So I am following Eloise’s advice, and taking my Estelle to the woods. There I will plead for her to be restored to me. I have little hope of success, for I do not know what dangers will face us, nor how best to deal with them. So if I do not return, let it be known that Lucianus of Jerbiton and his wife Estelle are somewhere within the wood.

Dear reader, should you attempt a rescue, you will find us singing to the lilting tune of a faerie harp.





House Traditions

by J. Angus MacDonald

Since magi are independent by nature, they have little need for organization and politics. (WGRE, p. 15)

Covenants are the centrepieces of the Order of Hermes, maybe even more important in their own way than the Tribunals. Certainly they matter above all else in play. From a gaming point-of-view, covenants are the creation of the players and storyguide in tandem; from an Order of Hermes point-of-view they are the dynamic expression of the Order in toto. According to *Wizards' Grimoire Revised Edition*, less than one third of all Covenants are single-House covenants; the reason is that such covenants become stagnant in their studies (WGRE, p. 43).

Houses of the Order are keepers of tradition, both their own idiosyncratic ones and those of the Order as a whole. Each House has certain traditions and tendencies, some quite rigid, others more open and flexible. Such traditions and tendencies are passed along from parens to apprentice with each successive generation. This is the standard view.

The problem here is actually quite a complicated one. Given that few covenants are mono-House institutions, how do these traditions continue to be passed down without significant changes? In this article I intend to provide answers to this puzzle, with suggestions for how they might be inserted into various campaigns.

Traditions and Tendencies

First a couple of definitions should be made of terms that will be used in this article. The word "Tradition" is herein taken to mean not merely dietary habits, celebrations, manners of dress and the like, but also the hard-and-fast rules particular to each House. "Tendency", by way of contrast, is taken to mean those notions surrounding a House that are not absolutely required by rules or traditions, but are seen as a standard image of the House.

Example 1: By Tradition members of House Bonisagus are given deference (Hermetic Prestige), may take promising apprentices away from other magi to train as their own, and are required to make their new findings public; by Tendency they are theoretical lab-rats, but there is also a sub-tendency towards being politically inclined.

Example 2: House Flambeau by Tradition has a meeting amongst its members at random times and in random locations; by Tendency they are magi of Ignem, but some prefer Perdo.

What are the traditions and tendencies we speak of within each of the Houses? For conven-

ience I present the following guidelines gleaned from various rules and supplements (next page).

Now let us return to the problem. Each magus was once an apprentice. Each apprentice is taught by a parens steeped in the traditions and tendencies of a given House. Over fifteen years of training the apprentice makes these traditions and tendencies part of his or her own being. This makes a certain amount of sense. On the other hand the apprentice is also living in a Covenant. In this Covenant, according to game canon, are members of differing Houses, each with a differing point-of-view as to how one is to view magic, what is important in and to the Order of Hermes, and how to approach magical and philosophical problems. Also there is the very real possibility that there is more than one apprentice in this Covenant. In other words the apprentice is not merely learning from his or her parens, but also from the Covenant environment.

Possible Comparisons

How then are traditions passed along unbroken? If we are to compare a House to anything contemporary to the characters, the best corollary is a monastic order. Carthusians have slightly different practices from Benedictines, but all are part of the Church. The two groups believe in the same God, agree on the same theology, accept the authority of the Pope, and other such external matters. Within their monasteries Carthusians, like Benedictines, study the Bible, copy books, say rounds of prayers, say Mass, and live in seclusion. On the other hand, the two orders have slightly different schedules for their prayers, important feast days, views on how much manual labour should be balanced by how much contemplative work, and so on. Each monastic order therefore maintains its own set of traditions.

The corollary breaks down when we jump from the Church to the Order of Hermes. Whereas Carthusians and Benedictines do not share monasteries with each other, the Houses of the Order share Covenants. Where an oblate to the Benedictines would be inculcated in the rituals of that order in an environment utterly given over to the Benedictine Order and its view of how the worship of God should take place, the apprentice of a given House is brought up in an environment far from conducive to maintaining such traditions. Indeed, it would seem that each Covenant would form at a minimum new tendencies that would be picked up by the apprentice, rather than strictly those espoused by a particular House.

Now, the Houses could be compared to the newly-emerging guilds rather than to monasteries. Here there is an advantage in that cities are dynamic environments with many people maintaining a variety of traditions and tendencies. On the other hand, each guild is localized, rather than spread across a wide area, and the actual training and



House	Traditions	Tendencies
Bjornaer	Heart-Beast; Gathering of Twelve Years; no familiars	Dislike of fire magics; nature-loving
Bonisagus	Position of respect; allowed to take apprentices from other magi; must make all discoveries public	Theoretical researchers
Criamon	Form in clutches; have tattoos; Enigmatic Wisdom	Speak in koan or otherwise mystical manner
Ex Miscellanea	None	None
Flambeau	Erratic gatherings of the House	Most are Ignem magi
Guernicus/Qaesitor	Do not vote at Tribunal meetings (at least directly); maintain the laws of the Order	Split between those who follow the Letter and the Spirit of the law
Jerbiton	Larta magi accepted	Like art or philosophy or close ties with mundanes
Mercere	Messengers of the Order	Most are non-magical
Merinita	Faerie Magic	Like faeries
Tremere	Problems of getting one's own sigil; complete control of House by elders	Strong with Certámen
Tytalus	Struggle	Struggle
Verditius	Poor casters without devices; great inventors; use Verditius Runes	Create enchanted items regularly; poor use of spontaneous magics

ceremonies of the guild take place somewhat removed from outside influences. This is especially true given that many cities group types of businesses (e.g. fullers and weavers) in a specific section of town.

Other writers and list-contributors have compared the Houses to university departments, modern business environments, or other non-contemporary groups. As these groups are not part of Mythic Europe I find the comparisons forced. They might work from a game mechanics point-of-view, but certainly they do not fit the general environment in which the game takes place.

Possible Solutions

As I see the problem, there are three possible outcomes.

- Option 1: Maintain the Houses as written. In this case most Covenants of the Order would have to be mono-House Covenants. This would allow for full maintenance of traditions and tendencies. Essentially the communities would be established in which such traditions would be accepted, regular, and acknowledged. The Order of Hermes becomes an overarching structure that legitimizes the formation of Houses and possibly even licenses when and where new Covenants could be established, much like the Church did with monastic communities and the newly-emerging mendicant orders. The Tribunals become regional designations, but are not nearly as important politi-

cally. Tribunal meetings would address regional issues and concerns, but the Houses would look into most matters regarding Covenant function, as each House would, almost of necessity, police its own. Houses would definitely have special meetings and some form of internal authority structure to make sure that the dictates of the House are maintained. There is a very strong chance that the designation Quaesitor and Redcap would become offices rather than Houses as they serve the Order of Hermes as a whole before anything else.

- Option 2: Maintain the Covenant structure. However, this reduces the importance of Houses; Tendencies might well be maintained, but few traditions. At this point the Order functions more or less as currently written, with the Tribunals acting as regional administrative units overseeing the Covenants for the larger body of the Order. House designation is usually a badge one creates for oneself, although there are others who might label you. Houses could then function as political parties, schools of thought, or trading groups, but they would not really be recognized by the Order as a unit. The number of Houses might actually increase and become more regionalized. Again Quaesitor and Redcap become office titles, rather than particular Houses. Tribunals become the political centre of the





Order and meetings become very vibrant, perhaps even dangerous, affairs.

- Option 3: Say, “Hey! This is only a game! The Houses are a convenient way to introduce people to the Order of Hermes!” Following this wise “get a life” attitude, we would just ignore this article. Sometimes this is a sane attitude...

The Special Cases: Verditius, Bjornaer, Merenita & Ex Miscellanea

These Houses each pose problems of their own. Verditius, Merenita, and Bjornaer are the Houses that truly mark one as a member by actually affecting the Gift.

When one apprentices with House Bjornaer, a Heart-Beast is awakened (or in some cases a Heart-Shape). This sets the magus apart from other magi not of this House. As such the Bjornaer magus gains deep insight into this animal (or shape), but loses the ability to have a familiar. While there has been some discussion as to “Just how different is a Bjornaer from a [fill in House] shapeshifter?”, the major point here is what becomes of the Follower of Bjornaer virtue? If the Houses are maintained (see Option 1 above) there is no real trouble. Indeed it becomes easier to explain how the gaining of the Heart-Beast takes place — there are particular secret ceremonies known only to House Bjornaer that bring out the Heart-Beast.

When one apprentices with House Verditius, all magic is suddenly tied to widgets. For each spell learned the Verditius magus crafts an artifact that must be used when actually casting the spell. This does create the problem of what a Verditius uses for spontaneous magic, but that is not specifically addressed. One imagines a Verditius carrying a host of “just in case” items that would aid in various combinations for spontaneous spells, but this is pure speculation. Conversely the Verditius magus gains the ability to craft superior enchanted items. This I see as a true “guild mystery”, much more so than the specialties of other Houses. Each master imparts secret wisdom to his or her apprentice with special instructions not to pass these mysteries to others who are not true members of the guild.

When one apprentices with House Merenita, all magic is somehow attached to “Faerie Magic”, one of the most ill-defined terms in *Ars Magica*. Unlike the Verditius flaw, Faerie Magic does not hinder the mage. Instead it is supposed to add a particular “flavour” to one’s magic. Until *WGRE* was published this addition caused little trouble other than minor amounts of confusion, such as what truly constitutes a “fay” spell. Chapter 11 of *WGRE*, however, added new levels of headaches. Now one’s score in Faerie Magic actively degrades one’s ability to use standard magic while simultaneously granting very large bonuses with “fay”



spells. The problem, as always, is that the nature of such faerie magics is still ill-defined and is open to wide levels of abuse. Then again, I have yet to find a campaign that uses the modified Faerie Magic rules without major levels of modification.

Ex Miscellanea is to me more of a philosophical conundrum. What exactly is the purpose of this House? From a straight gaming point-of-view it is gumbo — whatever you want to be, if it doesn’t fit somewhere else in the Order of Hermes, it fits here in House Ex Miscellanea. The history of the House, however, points to something a little different — it is the refuge for those magi not of the Hermetic tradition who wish to be acknowledged as part of the Order of Hermes. This leaves in question the exact position of the House. It could be:

- Option 1: A House devoted to individuals who do not learn in the Hermetic style, and thus are always a foreign body within the Order. In this case none of the magi of the House would be created in the “normal” manner; instead they would be vitkr, cunning folk, gruagachan, and the like. Essentially the House would act as a “dumping ground” for those not truly Hermetic and the “magi” of this House would perpetuate these traditions under the auspices of the Order. The House would have no real political power as the members would be second-class citizens within the Order (those of a corrupted Gift).
- Option 2: A half-way House, given to introducing hedge-magi to the Order. In this case while one is nominally part of House Ex Miscellanea, this is only a designator until such time as the rudiments of the true Hermetic tradition are learned; at that point one is most likely re-designated as a member of another House. The few actual members of the House act more like mentors, diplomats, and social workers than fulfilling the function standard magi. In this case the House needs no real political status within the Order as it charitable institution and crash-training centre.
- Option 3: A true hodge-podge House of no coherence whatsoever. A few magi would be Hermetic, albeit with some odd quirks, a few would be hedge-magi, and a few would be some melding of the two. This is more or less how the House currently functions, yet it is the most tenuous. Obviously there is nothing to keep this functioning as a single House other than the designation as such by other Houses. Indeed, it would seem that wherever this House, in this form, is strong, the rules of the Order would be weaker as the tendency to recognize the central authority of the Order as a whole would be vastly weakened.

The Mysteries

I have a great fondness for *The Mysteries*, as do many of us currently involved with *Ars Magica*. These groupings provide a much-needed medieval flavour to the magic system of *Ars Magica*. As has been said many times, the least medieval aspect of *Ars Magica* is the presence of the magi themselves. *The Mysteries* goes a long way towards correcting this problem by providing a more period feel to the Order.

The Mysteries do pose problems however. The first problem has been addressed by many people: how many breakdowns and groupings can there be in the Order? This is related to the number of magi people feel are in existence in toto for the game. The second problem relates more directly to this article: how much do the Mysteries and Houses overlap?

Looking to the two possible solutions I have proposed to the House problem, the position of the Mysteries could be answered in two entirely different manners. If Houses become more prominent (i.e. most Covenants are mono-House), the Mysteries become a sort of underground network that both ties part of the Order closer together by cutting across House lines as well as tears it apart by creating cabals that function in spite of House affiliations. Whether a given Mystery tears apart or binds together is more or less dependent on the particular Mysteries themselves. Equally the Lineages become interesting — given the same situation it would seem that the Lineages are tied to specific Covenants (e.g. the Line of Luj for House Tremere is really a specific Covenant somewhere in the Balkans).

The second solution to their position comes into play with the withering of the Houses (i.e. “House” is merely a badge or loose affiliation). In this case the Mysteries become something more informal than the Houses as currently written, yet

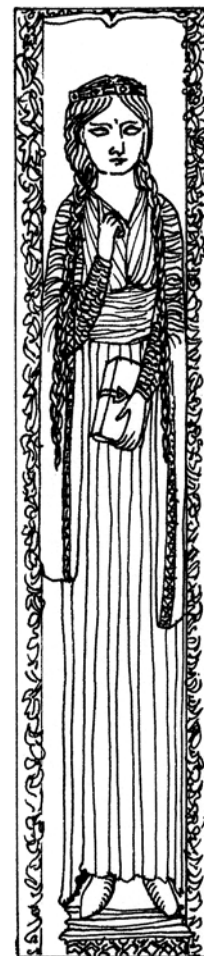
less tenuous and more important than the “badge” or “label” level of Houses. The Mysteries at this point form coherent groups that range across Tribunal borders creating links and alliances within the Order as a whole. Indeed they would probably be the seed point for the politics of the Order, but only if they actually have semi-regular meetings that would help reinforce their structure. Such meetings are already discussed in *The Mysteries*. Lineages become something more problematic unless they are themselves recast as Mysteries. Certainly this would be an option.

Conclusions

The Houses of Hermes are useful guides into the game of *Ars Magica*. They help us get ideas for character generation and help formulate notions of alliance and rivalry. These are very good from a gaming perspective. As I have tried to demonstrate, however, the Houses as currently portrayed make less sense from a political or sociological perspective. I hope this article gives some food for thought in your campaign. Even if no one else changes the structure of the Order of Hermes in their campaign after reading this, I hope it has provided some entertainment.

My thanks go out to everyone who has ever answered one of my annoying postings on the *BerkList*, *Gaming Outpost*, and *WebRPG Townhall Forum*. I would like to give special thanks to Jeremiah Genest for providing me with feedback to my meanderings over the years (one day we must meet in person...).

Most especially Niall Christie deserves mention, both for his willingness to provide direct feedback to this article and to listen to my ramblings both by telephone and e-mail. Any person willing to tackle an editing job in the middle of an international move is going above and beyond the call of duty. THANKS!



Dear Abelard

Translator's Note:

Dear Abelard is a column devoted to the writings of an elderly follower of Bonisagus who believed the best way to fulfill his duty to the Order was to share all of his advice and research in the form of written correspondence with a network of readers, carried by Redcaps to magi throughout Mythic Europe. If, through the course of your saga or studies, you discover a question that you think could have at one time been answered by Abelard, please forward it to the editor,

Hermes.Portal@wanadoo.fr or to
dearabelard@yahoo.com
and we will attempt to find a record of his reply.



Salvete Sodales,

This winter season, while the snow lies upon the ground and the wind blows through the trees, as the cold days and colder nights seep the warmth from my skin and draw out the youth from my body, my thoughts turn to the memory of a story I heard while travelling in Britannia, in the Stonehenge Tribunal. It concerns a king of men, and a king of faeries. I am told the tale is true, but I am no expert in Faerie Lore and I mean no offence to the Good Folk. I merely offer this tale as an illustration of winter and the effect it may have on kings and men.

“In an older time, many years ago, the ruler of the Britons was named King Henga. One winter, while hunting, a strange dwarf creature approached him, riding on a goat. He had a large head and a bushy red beard, and his feet were





hooves. However, he spoke well and behaved with a noble bearing. 'Hail, King Henga!' he said. 'I am the lord of a mighty realm with many vassals, and I bring you a message of friendship. You are the best of all kings who rule this upper world, and to do you honour I mean to be your guest when you are married next year. Perhaps you do not know it yet, but ambassadors from the King of France are already on their way to offer you his daughter's hand. Farewell until then!' With that, the dwarf-king turned swiftly and vanished.

"The next day, as the creature had said, the ambassadors arrived, and the marriage was arranged. The daughter was widely regarded as beautiful and good, and when she arrived a year later, she and King Henga were happily wedded. As they sat to the feast, the strange king he had met hunting was suddenly there with a great crowd of followers, so that they filled every seat and crowded the courtyard with silk tents. They brought rich wine and fine musicians, and heaped gifts before the bride. All were amazed and pleased. Then, the dwarf said to King Henga, 'Most excellent king, I have fulfilled my promise. I only ask that a year from now, when I am married, you will honour my wedding as I have honoured yours.' Henga agreed, and the strange guests returned to their tents and were gone by morning.

"King Henga did not forget his promise. All that year he gathered presents worthy of such a noble friend, and on the day when the dwarf king's guides arrived, King Henga and his knights set out with them, laden with gifts. They had not gone far when they reached a high cliff, and they were led deep into a dark cave lit with torches. Soon they emerged into a green meadow, and a great castle stood before them. There the Dwarf King met them, and led them into his splendid palace. The wedding was held, and all of them feasted and made merry for three days and nights. Before they left, the king gave Henga a little hound, small enough to sit with him on the saddle, and said, 'The return journey is dangerous. None of you must dismount from your horses until this hound leaps from the saddle.' With that, they left, and rode through the caves until they emerged on the other side, where the entrance closed behind them.

"Henga was anxious to return to his wife, and when he saw a peasant working he summoned him and asked what news there was of his queen. The peasant stood for a moment, then said: 'Sir, I hardly understand you, for you speak in the old Welsh tongue. I think I have heard the name of the lady you mention, for an old story tells that she married a king named Herla, who ruled this land long ago. Men say that he rode away to a distant land and was never seen again.' Upon hearing this, some of Henga's knights cried out, and two of them leapt to the ground. As their feet touched the earth, the weight of their years came upon them, and they crumbled into dust. Henga anxiously bid the oth-

ers to remain seated, for the hound still sat before him, and they rode on.

"It is said that Henga never found his lands, for all had been destroyed in battle by the conquering Saxons. Snow and ice lay heavily on the earth, hiding all that was familiar, and wherever the king and his knights travelled, all was changed and foreign to them. To this day, they are sometimes seen riding madly through the country, waiting in vain for the hound to leap from the saddle, and mourning the many years that were lost to them in Faerie."

So too might we all yearn for the years that we have lost, and seek to undo the choices we have made that have worked out for ill. Perhaps even we magi of the Order may regret the choices we have made in the past, and long to experience the joys of marriage or friends we have forsaken. But time cannot be broken, and age cannot be undone. As we read on to those others who have written here with advice and goodwill, let us consider this story and think upon what we have now that we value, that we may thank God for his blessings and wisely spend the time that we have given to us.



Dear Abelard,

I am writing to ask you to help me with my difficult situation. I am not a member of your Order, but I am familiar with it and your writings due to my fortunate position as a servant in the covenant of Bellaquin, in what you call the Provençal Tribunal. As I help to manage our covenant's resources, specifically our expenses and income, I believe that I have earned the trust of the great men and women whom I serve. However, I feel the difference between us keenly, for I do not wield the power and presence of my masters, and thus I try to keep to my place, as a good servant should.

I am secretly affected by great anguish, which none but you will now know fully. One of the newest magi to join Bellaquin is a handsome, strong and charismatic man very close to my age. The gods of beauty have truly blessed him. I have lived for four and twenty years, and I assure you I am not given to girlish fantasies of true love or the lustful desires of the flesh. I have been courted many times before, but I have never thought to seek a husband. Yet I cannot stop thinking about this man. I fail in my duties when I spy him from afar, as I stare at his body and imagine him holding me in his arms. My cheeks and hands become warm when he draws near, such that I cannot hold a quill, and my breath accelerates so that my distress must be obvious, though fortunately he has seemed not to notice.

I feel that these thoughts I have of him are sinful and wrong, but I cannot stop them. If he should come to me, I could not refuse him. Yet I do not know if we could ever be married, for I do not know if your Order would punish him for choosing a partner below his station, and I believe



I am surely not as desirable a mother for his children as a woman with your Gift. Please, dear Abelard, can you advise me what I should do? Have I no hope of a virtuous relationship with this man? I am frightened that I will have to leave this place for ever if I cannot control myself and in weakness expose my longing for him.

Signed, Margaret in Provence

My dear Margaret,

Your letter has caused me great concern and worry for you, for your position is not a happy one. I regret that I must give you unpleasant advice. I beg you to be strong.

While it is not impossible for a union such as you describe to occur, it is very unlikely. Few magi in my experience take wives or husbands, for the magic that sustains us beyond our years makes it impossible for our bodies to sire or bear children. As the Church teaches that this is the rightful purpose of marriage, it is wrong for us to enter into that holy union without the ability to fulfil our duty. Perhaps you have some little hope in this regard, for if the magus you love is younger than thirty, he may not yet have need of a longevity potion, and thus his virility may remain undamaged. If this is so, he may physically be able to take you as a wife.

But, alas, there are the issues you fear concerning the differences between a magus of the Order and their custodes. Having consulted my wise amica Moratamus, I can tell you that there seem to be no traditional prohibitions within the Order against magi taking wives or husbands, but in Normandy and Provence, at least, there are social prohibitions. Many magi come to think of those without the Gift who live with them and serve them as men and women beneath their station. Like a lord who loves his servant, such marriages are often considered unthinkable.

It is unfortunate that your position at Bellaquin may be threatened by this (you will notice I have substituted the name of a different covenant to protect your reputation). If an unpleasant situation develops between you and the magus you seem to love, it is possible that the governing body of Bellaquin would send you away. This is not just, but the Order tends to value our brethren over our custos. I bring this fact to your attention to warn you of the possible consequences of acting upon your desire.

And yet, this magus may admire you and consider you worthy of him. I cannot be sure of this. You might try to give him some signal, a sign of your feeling for him, to see how he responds. If he treats you with respect and affection, he may have or develop honourable intentions towards you. If he continues to treat you as a servant, or callously tries to take advantage of his position and your desire for him, you must begin the unpleasant task of suppressing your feelings for him. If you do not, I fear the pain will only grow worse.



Dear Abelard,

Iardanus filius Marta of Bonisagus, patron of my covenant, has informed me that you and your readers might be interested to know something of the nature of pregnancy and childbirth and those aspects that would have particular significance to magi of the Order. He has asked me to send you my thoughts on the subject, as I have some personal experience that may lend weight to my words. Personally, I am of the opinion that many magi attach a certain stigma to this topic and will therefore be uninterested in such a work.

First, to speak to the physical effects of pregnancy on a maga: it is certain that she will undergo some changes to her body and its functions that may hinder her ability to perform physical activities, but not so much as to render her incapacitated except in the event of extreme circumstances. I have found that the first season of a pregnancy is the most physically taxing, although certainly some fatigue is felt throughout. By the third season her abdomen may have expanded such that she may experience some difficulty keeping to her feet, and her movement and agility will be decreased. If the maga was in good physical condition prior to the pregnancy, however, I believe she will be capable of performing all but the most gruelling of tasks, although it may not be wise to do so for fear of the child being harmed in some way during the process. Further, she may find that her eyesight changes or worsens, and she will perhaps experience an inability to properly concentrate on the task at hand, seeing as her mind is occupied with the upcoming birth and all its implications.

Labour and birth itself require tremendous effort, and encompass an element of real danger for the maga. However, there are means, both mundane and magical, to alleviate these stresses. Many midwives possess knowledge of herbs and tisanes that will ease the pain of the process and perhaps act to staunch any undue bleeding. Further, I am sure that your readers will be familiar with spells such as *Easing the Strain of Childbirth* that also can assist a maga at this time, as will many of the standard Corpus spells that help us heal the body in other circumstances. I have heard that some secret magical lineages and cults of fertility may possess even more specific spells and charms of this sort, but I myself did not search these out.

This said, however, I would not advise trying to seriously alter the course of a pregnancy through magical means. I would think any attempt to magically create or alter a foetus would run up against the limits of the soul and of essential nature. There are those who may consider infusing such a created child with a spirit, daemon or ghost, but I believe that you would only create a monstrous thing with a half-life that would soon have to be put down. There are other magical means to



The Curious Tale of Vaska Praskovaya

by Robert Hansen

Vaska was born to a young couple in Boraska, a market townlet in eastern Poland. His father had long hoped for a child, and the previous nine months had found him swelling with pride at the local tavern, where he spent most of his evenings, or the market stall where patrons found themselves buying produce just to halt the flow of hyperbole. Most locals gave him the benefit of the doubt; Boraska had been but a small village until the opening of the market three years earlier, now, with farm producing being bought and sold the population was growing rapidly, the hamlet had its own priest, and the general feeling in the town itself was one of birth. Still, as the months passed, and the delivery approached, many prayed for an early birth to quiet the man.

Vaska's mother, in contrast, was always quiet and reserved, but as she swelled she seemed to develop the gentle radiance and beauty of one for whom the entire world is as it should be. The new priest, a passionate young man, blessed the unborn child, and the midwife warned of no complications. The birth, when it came, was no more anxious than most, though the father had spent the afternoon drinking himself into a stupor in an effort to calm his nerves. The neighbours, clustered around the small house's door, smiled in relief as the sound of grunting was replaced by the lusty wailing of a newborn.

Their expressions changed, however, when a scream from the midwife was added to the general clamour. Dropping the baby on the corner of the bed she fled the dwelling, pronouncing the child to touched by the devil. Hustling inside, the listeners found the exhausted mother staring in sick fascination at the tiny red object squalling on the bedding. Half of the child's face was hideously twisted and disfigured; one ear was missing and the eye was sunk deep into the skull. In a gaggle, they fled to inform the priest, the father and anyone else who would stand still to listen.

The priest arrived to find the child being carefully suckled by a grim-faced mother. "I have named him Vaska" she announced, before any could forestall her. "He is my son".

"He is touched by the Dark One" announced the priest, after examining the tiny face. "No good will come of this". With a flourish of his heavy cape, he strode from the little house, followed by a flock of questioning neighbours.

The father knew nothing of this; he had held to consciousness long enough to hear his new son's first cry, and then had slipped quietly into unconsciousness, a smile imprinted on his face. This changed the next morning, when he roused

to examine the new centre of his world, and beheld something clearly not of his get. He had spent the previous half of the year extolling the quality of his bloodline; the mother must have consorted with the Devil to produce such a malformed offspring.

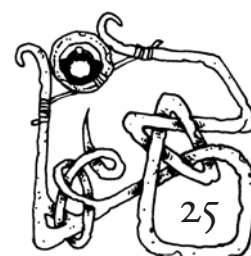
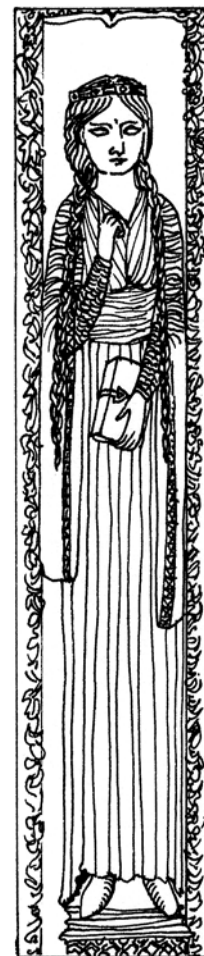
Vaska's first memories were of the thin screams of his mother being beaten yet again by his father. The neighbours, knowing full well what was going on, refused to interfere in what they saw as his right as husband. The child was just nine months old when his mother's heart, tired by caring for a child single-handed and wearied from the ostracism of her neighbours, gave out during one of these chastisements. With an expression of satisfaction the drunken man reeled out of the house and collapsed unconscious in the snow. With none willing to approach the dwelling after dark for fear of what they might witness, it was not until the next morning that a sweeper found him dead of hypothermia.

With both parents dead, young Vaska officially became a ward of the state, and, in a tradition brought with the recent influx of Christian influence, was given into the care of the priest, much to the dismay of the minister, who's opinion of his own rights and duties did not include caring for a small devil-child. However, orders from the bishop that he must obey all aspects of the charter detailing the duties of a priest, drawn up at the baptism of the King, left him with little choice, and the assurance of his parishioners that he would be just the mentor required to "beat the devil out of that child" that decided him.

Vaska's childhood was short and brutal. The slightest mistake or wrongdoing, whether imaginary or real, was punished with harsh blows or constraint within a tiny cupboard. Almost as soon as he was able to walk, he was expected to earn his keep, performing the numerous chores even a small church requires to continue functioning.

The child was considered subhuman, and treated as such. He was expected to make do with ragged clothing and scraps, while those around him gorged on the donated bounty of the God-fearing villages. He was not even accorded the basic right of baptism; according to the scriptures, when he died he would have no hope of entering heaven, as he had not been cleansed of original sin.

Vaska discovered this shortly after his fourth birthday; he had been taught to read latin at an early age to increase the range of menial tasks he could perform. This ability was put to the test by the priest, who would order him to memorise passages of the Bible in addition to his ordinary tasks. However, the young boy showed an incredible aptitude for these challenges, though this went unnoticed for many years; Vaska quickly discovered that memorising more text simply resulted in the next task being made correspondingly more





difficult. Thus, while openly displaying moderate skill, he began to rapidly devour the tiny cache of religious texts owned by his guardian. While there was much he did not understand, he read and reread every page, pondering and discarding theories and world-views.

As he aged, the discrimination of those about him became more obvious. He quickly realised that all those around him did not live as he did, but that the world contained such wonders as love and joy. While he had vague recollections of a woman who would hold him in her arms and make everything seem right with the world, he forced himself into a more cynical outlook, ignoring love as soft and weak, merely because he had never experienced it himself.

No adult would speak to him without some overriding reason, and when they did so they use harsh, clipped terms. They refused to allow their children to play with him; a needless order, since the only time one of his peers would speak with him was when dared by another. Vaska discovered that merely wandering around the town would earn him a scolding at best, or simply result in the setting of more chores.

The solution to this dilemma was readily available. Though Boraska itself was dependant on farmers and produce for its wealth, all of the cleared cropland lay to the south and the east. To the north lay vast expanses of wilderness; rocky outcrops studded with dripping fur trees. It was here that Vaska found what he considered to be his first true home.

The boy whiled away many happy hours in the forest. Though he had no formal training, he taught himself the lore of the forest and wilderness. He learned the habits and tracks of the inhabitants, the properties of different species of plant (though not by their correct names). By following the wild boar through the wilderness, he determined which plants would be safe to supplement his meagre diet. As his legs and arms became more powerful from the outdoor living, he learned to hunt down small animals. His first attempts at cooking ended badly, but soon he grew to depend upon this new source of energy to provide the vigour needed by a growing boy.

This state of affairs might have continued, had it not been for the great storm that year. Vaska had spent three whole days polishing and arranging ornaments in the church for the feast of Boraska's patron saint, and was desperate for some time alone. While the service started (he was, of course, excluded from such an important ceremony), he ignored the driving rain and made for his forest, to shelter under the outstretched branches.

A few hours were spent happily hurling stones at a twig stuck upright in a tree stump, and halted only when the sound of dripping from the branches was shattered by a crash of thunder. The rain began to pour down through the trees, turn-

ing the forest surface underfoot into a muddy morass. Turning to hurry home, Vaska caught his leg under an exposed root and crashed to the ground, badly twisting his ankle.

In his earlier exuberance, he had ventured further that was his wont from the town, and he knew full well that he would be unable to drag himself the five miles back to the church in the storm. Twenty minutes of agonising crawling brought him to a small outcrop of rock under which he gratefully slid.

Lying half-submerged in a pool of water, Vaska slowly realised that, unless he could find some way to warm himself, it was unlikely that he would survive the night. Unable to venture out, he was able to collect a small pile of twigs from within reach, but every branch was soaked through. Unwilling to admit defeat, he constructed a small pile and tried desperately to spark a warming fire into life.

After almost an hour of effort, his attempts were becoming more, not less frantic. His legs had gone numb from the cold. His fingers raw and bleeding from the frenzied impacts of the flint on the striker, lungs raw from the hacking cough he had developed, he wished, more than anything he had wanted before, more than he had ever wanted to be whole and normal, more than he had prayed for the return of his loving mother, that the fire would catch and warm him.

He assumed the tingling sensation building in his arms and legs was yet another symptom of approaching death from the cold, but it swelled inside him, making him feel as if he would burst from the pressure. As he opened his mouth and screamed, the pile of dead wood exploded into flames, incinerating much of the wood, and throwing the tiny shelter into harsh relief. Dizzy with exhaustion, Vaska had just enough energy to pile more damp wood onto the tiny inferno before sleep claimed him.

On waking, the storm had slackened, and he was able to drag himself back to civilisation. He barely felt the beating he received for dirtying his rags, so preoccupied was he with what had occurred. On waking he had examined the fire, and was sure that his memories were not mere cold-fuelled hallucinations; even if he had somehow lit damp twigs no normal fire would have been sufficient to melt the solid rock above the flames.

As far as he knew, unnatural powers came from two sources; his guardian often preached on the subject. Large-scale demonstrations of power were good things, granted by God. Smaller uses of power, such as a cow falling ill unexpectedly, were evil sent by some witch in the neighbourhood, powers that came directly from the Devil.

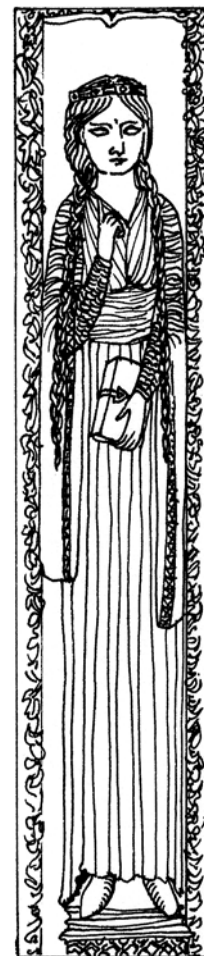
However, the identity of a third group was slowly uncovered by some judicious listening and a few questions. Mages were a necessary evil, whose



power was not openly acknowledged as coming from the Dark One, although this seemed to be the source secretly considered most likely by the inhabitants of Boraska. Direct questions on the subject, however, drew even more blows than usual from those around him, and he resorted to the small stock of theological texts. In these, mages were often mentioned, but rarely more than in

passing. Scholars and priests in the book often travelled 'in the company of mages', or vanquished evils 'with the assistance of a mage'. No details, however, were forthcoming.

Instinctively, Vaska knew that mentioning his new-found ability would be an extremely bad idea. Instead, he spent as much free time as he could sneak out in the wilderness, trying to recreate that





night he had formed fire. On his first attempt, he spent many hours attempting to summon the power from inside himself. Enraged by his failure when evening came, he eventually managed to channel his fury and blast a tree.

Practise brought control and finesse. He no longer required hatred and anger to wield his power; the memory of the priest beating him, or the losses he had suffered, was enough to draw the energy out of him and summon fire. He was careful never to display any indication of power in town; if anything, abuse became easier to stand with the knowledge that he had to power to take revenge if he chose to use it.

Just six months after he began experimenting with this new-found power, a stranger in a dark cloak arrived in the town. While Boraska was not unused to stranger, this one had an air of mystery and power which caused those around him to avoid him where possible. It drew Vaska to him like a moth to a flame.

Vaska trailed the man around the markets for a day. Vaska was good at making himself inconspicuous, but he was sure from the way his target held himself that his presence was known. Eventually, the memory of chores undone forced Vaska to return to the church, determined to finish his polishing as quickly as possible and track down the mysterious man again.

He felt, rather than heard, the presence behind him. Turning, he found himself staring into the dark, glinting eyes of one he knew to be a kindred spirit. The dark man proceeded to explain the basic system of Hermetic magic; the process of apprenticeship, power and responsibility. He acknowledged himself as a member of House Flambeau, and offered Vaska the place as his apprentice.

Vaska had never had anyone speak openly to him, as an equal, and his thirst for knowledge drove him to a rapid decision. "This is not something to enter into lightly, however", noted his master-to-be, before Vaska could voice his acceptance. "I will leave town at first light tomorrow morning, it was your power that drew me here anyway. If you wish to dedicate your life to magic, you may join me".

As the man he now knew to be an authentic mage swept from the church, Vaska felt like he was about to explode with joy. He had the opportunity to find a place he would fit in, where he would be accepted for what he was, rather than what he looked like. He was capering with glee as he replaced the ornaments on their respective shelves; he would be gone by tomorrow morning, no need for polishing now. It was as he was doing so that he heard that tap of a shoe on the floor behind him.

"So, I always knew that you were touched by the Devil! Consorting with that spawn of Satan, who wields evil powers openly! Well, since I can-

not rouse the village and turn their righteous anger against him, I will ensure that his evil influence spreads no further!" So saying, the priest sent Vaska sprawling. Seizing a candlestick from the shelf, he declared "But, before I lock you in the closet to ensure you remain true to the faith, I will beat the evil from your hide!" So saying, he began to rain blows upon the cowering Vaska, screaming "Repent!" with each impact.

Vaska's mind was filled with a soundless scream of rage. His opportunity for a good life, for fulfilment and happiness, was being snatched by this ignorant cleric, too sure of his own righteousness to acknowledge his prejudice or selfishness. Finally, the rage took over; as his parent for the last ten years raised the weapon to head-height, it exploded in a shower of molten metal. Screaming, trying to protect his face, the man hurled the misshapen lump from him, where it set fire to some draperies. Soon the church was burning violently, and its pastor was crawling outside, attempting to sooth his ruined hands and face. Vaska limped out unnoticed in the confusion, and tired to put as much distance between himself and the blaze as possible, until he was halted by a figure blocking his path.

"This was not what I had in mind when I offered you an apprenticeship. It may be that you do not have to control required to act as a Mage". It was only then that the man noticed the bleeding wounds covering Vaska's back. "However, I think that perhaps in these very special circumstances I can afford to be lenient. Now, let us leave before that priest decides that something else needs burning, eh". With that, he led Vaska to a pair of horses, which, instead of snorting violently as most animals did in his presence, tolerated his touch and allowed him to mount. Together, the pair rode out.

Vaska served a fifteen year apprenticeship, and entered House Flambeau as a member at the age of twenty-six. He has an incredible affinity for fire, and almost all of his formulaic spells are of this form, though he shows some aptitude with earth, particularly metal. He is still extremely shy and reclusive, and avoids strangers whenever possible. After the last, nightmarish night of his mundane life, he has developed a great deal more control over his powers, and is no longer prone to spontaneous outbursts.

He still despises those who believe too strongly in their own righteousness, while he goes out of his way to protect the crippled and disabled. To hold together his fragile self-esteem, he has come to consider those who shun him to be insignificant, else he would likely be crushed under the weight of their disdain. However, while he affects a gruff and sour disposition he cares very much for those who accept him as a friend.



Deus ex Magica

by Erik Dahl

Many players of **Ars Magica** have expressed a desire to play “pious” magi: those who do not ignore God, who do good works with their magic and whose powers are not sinful and thus not limited by the Dominion. *Pax Dei* presented 3rd Edition rules for creating such a character, which culminated with a magus who could intimately combine his magical Arts with the Divine. However, those rules have not been updated for the 4th Edition, and the following article attempts to present ideas for adapting the concept to a newer, more balanced style of play.

This article proceeds from the assumption that magic is not evil, nor is it necessarily sinful. It suggests that magic as practiced by the Order of Hermes is worldly and often stained with vanity and pride, and that it is steeped in idolatrous pagan rituals and symbolism handed down from the Cult of Mercury. Christian magi might argue that it is these factors that cause magic to be penalized in Divine areas, and that it is these practices that endanger the soul of a Christian magus.

Below are two suggestions for paths that a magus could follow to avoid obvious conflict with the Divine, and thus practice magic without apparent heavenly disfavour. The first is a humbling vocation, where the magus chooses to practice a form of magic that relies entirely on the natural world, drawing forth the supernatural properties of things through knowledge of alchemy and philosophy, a newer practice often scorned by other members of the Order. The second guides the character through a personal transformation to align his magical practices with Biblical teaching, whereby he may perform good and holy works with his Arts and use his powers in harmony with the Divine will.

Both paths require a character to sacrifice the comfortable aspects of life normally afforded to a Hermetic magus, in pursuit of his salvation. Virtues are included to allow characters to begin with these goals in mind, though storyguides may prefer to leave them as achievements that are only attainable through soul searching and experience. Also included are two secret societies that use the rules for mystae (see *The Mysteries*), which may give ideas of how to slowly initiate a character into the secrets of magic pleasing to God.

Natural Magic

In order to practice his Arts in a way that is not sinful, a magus might choose to study natural magic, a form of hedge wizardry that draws upon the natural properties of objects to capture their mystical essence. This esoteric branch of knowledge is studied by Natural Magicians, and is fully described in *Hedge Magic*, page 40. However, Nat-

ural Magicians are not magi, as they do not have the understanding or power required to practice the Hermetic Arts. Because the supernatural activities of Natural Magicians are not hindered by Divine auras, it may seem that they can work magic without sin. These rules allow magi to voluntarily give up some of their power, in order to use Hermetic magic in more or less the same way as Natural Magicians.

Natural Magicians rely on two important Knowledges: Philosophiae and Alchemy. Hermetic magi can learn these Abilities, and once they have been exposed to the principles of natural magic, they can use them to perform Natural Alchemy, Spellcrafting and Enchantments in exactly the same way as Natural Magicians. Of course, natural magi can still perform Hermetic magic whenever they choose, accepting the spiritual consequences of apparently sinful practices in exchange for increased power and versatility.

Natural magi bridge the differences between Natural Magicians and Hermetic magi, and can translate their understanding of the magical properties of nature into formulaic spells that all magi can cast without penalty in the Dominion. This is a groundbreaking new form of magic, recently developed in Mythic Europe, and probably found only near major cities of learning like Paris or Bologna in 1220. In a saga focusing on natural magic, Hermetic magi might come across one or two low-magnitude examples of natural spells, perhaps inspiring them to seek out their origin and thus learn more about natural magic.

A natural spell is indicated with an (N) after its name, and can be taught to other Hermetic magi, even those without understanding of natural magic. When casting a natural spell, Hermetic magi use the Natural Magician listing on the Aura Interaction table (which has no penalty in the Dominion) and do not need voice or gestures. The caster must use the Spell Focus, though he gains no bonus to his spell total for doing so.

To avoid sin and to take advantage of their higher Ability scores, natural magi can spellcraft natural spells instead of using Hermetic magic. They assemble the effect as usual, making their preparations and releasing the spell, using the Spell Focus to determine their form and effect bonus. When using a natural spell, this process takes them only 5 minutes for each magnitude of the spell, rather than 15, and costs them no Fatigue levels. Otherwise, the process exactly corresponds to a Natural Magician's spellcrafting ability.

To develop a natural spell, you must first design the effect. You must have high enough Art scores to be able to cast the spell using Hermetic magic, treating Alchemy and Philosophiae as respective Technique and Form requisites. Determine a Spell Focus for the spell, using form and effect bonuses to describe its bonus for natural





magi. After a season of effort, you develop a natural spell.

For example, Episein of Bonisagus wishes to design a natural version of *Chirurgion's Healing Touch* (CrCo20). He has Alchemy 7, Philosophiae 8, Creo 10 and Corpus 3. For the purposes of inventing the spell, he has Creo 7 and Corpus 3, since Alchemy limits his Creo and Corpus limits his Philosophiae. He uses a small bloodstone as the spell focus (+3), and his lab total gives an additional +7, making him just barely able to invent the spell in one season.

Most laboratory activities involve Hermetic magic, so apart from Natural Alchemy, Enchantments or study, it is very rare for natural magi to perform lab work. Natural magi do not typically have familiars, talismans, imprints or the like, and are unlikely to engage in Certamen or invoke other symbols of Mythic Europe's wizardly culture. However, when it is necessary to convert Hermetic magic into natural magic, use Alchemy and Philosophiae as requisites to Technique and Form, as above.

Many learned clergymen consider natural magic a form of philosophy, a rational method by which an educated person can bring out the beneficial properties of God's natural materials. Even the most righteous Christian often accepts that natural materials can be used to create effects that others would regard as magical. Natural magi may find that they can maintain a close association with the Church in spite of their magical pursuits.

Members of the Order of Hermes, however, tend to consider natural magic a form of hedge wizardry. They generally question why a person with the Gift would practice a weaker and less reliable form of magic, behaving like a charlatan or charm-maker, when he could wield much greater power with Hermetic magic. Natural magi thus risk acquiring a poor reputation among the other members of the Order, similar to the -1 Hedge Wizard Flaw.

Magi can learn natural magic through the course of a saga, by studying from a natural magus and learning Alchemy, Philosophiae and Magic Sensitivity, or they can create a character that has already developed his knowledge in these fields. Below is a Hermetic Virtue to represent a beginning character that has already developed this understanding.

Natural Magic, +2: You have been taught the practices of Natural Magic, which you have learned to practice using the Hermetic Arts. You begin with Alchemy 3, Philosophiae 3 and Magic Sensitivity 1, which you can increase like other Abilities, but you also have a negative Reputation within the Order of Hermes as a hedge wizard, at level 3.



Secret Societies

The Carpenters

Symbol: Four nails and a wooden hammer

Motto: *Versa, Verte, Volve* ("Consider, Interpret, Pass On")

Goals and Practices: The Carpenters are a small and relatively new sect of magi who have adopted the principles of Natural Magic as a humble way to practice magic with heavenly favour. Similar to monks or mendicant friars, the Carpenters take vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, cultivating God's earth to produce what they need and at all times respecting the authority of their elders. Curiosity and industry are highly prized attributes, and most have strong ties to the universities. They often manufacture simple items that are blessed with natural charms for those in need and discuss philosophy with those who will listen. All members practice natural magic exclusively; performing Hermetic magic is grounds for punishment and even expulsion from the society. For this reason, they tend to remain separate from their Hermetic brethren, though they will occasionally help those magi who seek them out.

Virtues: Alchemy +1, Healer +1, Animal Ken +1, Higher Purpose +1, Magic Sensitivity +1, Sense Holiness/Unholiness +1, Premonitions +2, Training +2, Visions +2

Preferred Ordeals: Good Works, Magical Vow (obedience, poverty and chastity), Pledge, Obligation.

Pious Magic

Magi devoted to God and His works may seek to completely divorce their practice of magic from the idolatrous influence of pagan religions, and associate it wholly with God, invoking His will through prayer and piety. This process is difficult, for it requires that a magus be willing to relearn much of what he has already discovered about magic and the Hermetic arts.

Pious magic is a gift given by God to those who follow His teachings and perform His works. It is a transformation of thinking, where the magus comes to believe that Hermetic magic is

wrong, and seeks an alternative. Once gifted with Pious magic, magi can continue to use and learn it so long as they maintain their piety, abstain from sin, and follow the Divine will.

Once this decision has been made, such characters should no longer perform Hermetic magic. Practitioners of pious magic believe that using Hermetic magic is a sin that will stain their souls in much the same way as perjury or theft. In spite of this, it is not unusual for characters to regress, perhaps believing that they are better serving the Divine with their magic, and the temptation to revert to old practices might be the central struggle for their pious characters. Should a pious magus commit a terrible wrong, or fail drastically in his devotion, the storyguide may decide that his pious magic has ceased to function. This crisis may require drastic action to overcome; the character is tested, requiring him to prove his faith using mundane means, with each new regression forcing greater and longer penances. Only by making amends and sincerely repenting can a character overcome these lapses.

Pious magic does not need to be miraculous, but it is infused with love and respect for God. Its effects need not feel holy; while it serves the Divine, pious magic is still magic. It is important that characters do not develop the belief that they are somehow “backed” by God, or that they speak for God, for that is the sin of presumption, a kind of Pride. Pious magic does not need to show off, since God’s power is manifest in the world He created. Pious magi simply use these tools to share God’s glory with those who cannot see it, and to protect the weak from those who would lead them astray. Pious magic does not need to break Hermetic limits to achieve these goals.

With that in mind, however, pious magic might overcome some of the limits of magic on occasion, though in what situations and for what reason is up to the troupe and the storyguide to evaluate. One reason for this might be Divine intervention; God may miraculously assist a pious character by subtly boosting the effects of his magic, if the circumstances are particularly appropriate. Some effects, particularly those that affect the Infernal, might circumvent Hermetic limits by allowing the character to see through a demonic illusion, for example. However, these effects should never be commonplace, and the troupe should take care to ensure that such wonders are clearly associated with Divine favour and not personal power. The faithful should never be deceived into believing that a pious magus is a miracle-worker or a saint, for he is only using his magical talents in God’s service.

Those who practice pious magic are tempting targets for demons and other infernal adversaries. Pious magic acts like a beacon for all manner of evil creatures. The storyguide should balance the character’s attunement to the Divine with hatred

and temptation from the Infernal, and be prepared to plot his downfall by dark forces if he should begin to stray from the path. In fact, while pious magic has no effect when a magus tries to use it for evil (according to the Limit of Sin, below) demonic powers may step in to fuel such corrupt spells, further damning him through their intervention and perhaps misleading him into believing that God wills his evil actions.

Faeries may also be negatively affected by the character’s presence or use of pious magic. Those who dislike the Church and the Dominion for intruding upon their habitats may similarly despise pious magi, and the pious character may find that he is harassed when travelling through faerie lands. Many who follow the path to pious magic may begin to see faeries as enemies, since they can lead believers away from God. However, not all faeries are opposed to the Divine; many stories exist of fae who are interested in God and salvation, and who live happily among pious folk (see *Faeries* for more information about Church faeries).

The Order of Hermes has little understanding of pious magic, but the subject is not looked upon with political favour. The Mercurial tradition is strong within the Order, and the suggestion that it is a form of idolatry is insulting to powerful magi. Pious magic, were it understood, would likely be seen as inferior and weak in comparison to Hermetic magic, since it is inherently limited and requires so many sacrifices. For many magi, pious magic is clearly interference in the affairs of the mundanes, and while there is no compelling reason to seek them out to destroy them, pious magi stand a good chance of being Marched if they call too much attention to themselves.



Suggested Limits for Pious Magic

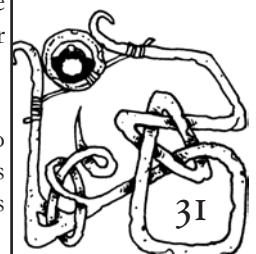
The Limit of Divinity

Like Hermetic magic, pious magic cannot overcome the power of the Highest Divinity, though it may circumvent the deceptions of infernal powers in a limited fashion. By identifying the truth, pious magic can deduce the presence of supernatural deception or illusion. It cannot determine the purposes behind those deceptions or illusions, nor can it clearly distinguish between demons and angels, since they seem to be made of the same “substance”. Thus, pious magic can sense holiness and unholiness, but not holiness *or* unholiness — it cannot tell if something is Divine or Infernal, only that it is either Divine or Infernal.

According to these guidelines, pious magic can detect angels and demons in spiritual form with Intellego Vim, and can see through illusion to a target’s true form with Intellego Imaginem (for physical images) or Intellego Mentem (for mental illusions).

The Limit of Sin

Pious magic cannot be used to commit a sin, no matter how minor, not even indirectly. Sinful effects simply do not function, or cease to function as soon as they are used for ill.





Like the practitioners of magic associated with exotic lineages such as Bjornaer or Merinita, or the followers of secret Hermetic societies that study branches of esoteric magic, pious magi recognize that there is little value (and perhaps some danger) in emphasizing the differences between their practices and those of other magi. They thus tend to be reclusive rather than calling attention to their beliefs or the faults of others.

Learning Pious Magic

Characters who cleanse their magic of idolatrous influence must devote themselves to it; they travel down a path that is distinct from Hermetic magic. They must abandon their years of magical training and understanding of the supernatural world to see the created order in a new way. To begin this journey, pious magi must be touched by the Divine in some meaningful way, be it a blessing from a saint, or the witnessing of a miracle. The criteria for gaining a Faith point are good examples of this sort of event (though True Faith is not a requirement for pious magic). Because of this holy experience, magi are transformed, and may begin to learn how to use their magic to serve the Divine.

Characters can study pious magic from someone who practices it, or by embarking upon a spiritual quest to discover it alone. As pious magic is extremely rare and does not have a positive reputation in the Order, finding a mentor may be difficult. Many magi who practice pious magic live in isolated places, rarely associated with a covenant. The search for a mentor, or for the understanding that allows magi to conform their magic to the Divine will, may be the subject of many adventures.

Through study, pious magi eventually gain a new Arcane Knowledge, Pious Magic Theory. This can be taught or learned like Hermetic Magic Theory, and fills much the same role for pious magic: it may be used for lab activities and represents how deeply magi understand the principles of harmony between magic and the Divine. They retain their knowledge of Hermetic magic, but must adapt it to serve their new purpose. This requires that they effectively re-learn Magic Theory.

Pious magi may study Pious Magic Theory, if they have access to a teacher or a text. They may also train themselves — magi gain experience for each season they practice. If their Magic Theory is higher than their Pious Magic Theory, magi may meditate upon the differences between Hermetic and pious magic, improving Pious Magic Theory through self Disputatio. In this manner, they may gain $((\text{Intelligence} + \text{Disputatio} + 6) / 5)$ experience points of Pious Magic Theory in a season of meditation and prayer.

Once they understand Pious Magic Theory, pious magi must relearn all of their formulaic spells. Pious spells are not compatible with Her-



metic ones, so to learn new spells they must either seek out those written by other pious magi, or invent their own. A pious magus may also translate spells learned as a Hermetic magus — he may convert a spell in one season as long as his lab total is greater than the level of the spell, or multiple spells if his lab total exceeds their combined levels.

Arts written or taught using Pious Magic Theory are incomprehensible to other magi without this Ability; treat the character as if he had the Incomprehensible -2 Flaw when teaching magic to Hermetic students. Pious spells cannot be taught to Hermetic magi.

Pious magi cannot use Hermetic words or gestures with their magic, since they are the root of Hermetic “idolatry” and invoke the symbolism of worldly rituals and unholy powers. A pious magus learns to draw his power from God. Thus, pious magi receive any penalties to their magic totals that they would normally accrue when practicing magic without voice or gestures. Over time, as pious magi increase their understanding of the Divine, they can learn to substitute prayer and ceremony in place of their Hermetic practices — see the Pious Words and Gestures Table. These bonuses only apply if the character normally suffers a penalty for not using words or gestures.

With all of these penalties, there are a number of mechanical benefits. Pious magic cannot be botched; pious magi use a quality die rather than a stress die when rolling for effects. Instead of using



Pious Words and Gestures

Voice	Modifier
Booming:	Theology -9
Firm:	Theology -10
Soft:	(Theology / 2) -10
None:	-10
Gesture	Modifier
Vigorous:	Church Lore -4
Bold:	Church Lore -5
Subtle:	(Church Lore / 2) -5
None:	-5

vis, pious magi may spend long-term Fatigue; each Fatigue level spent is equivalent to one pawn, and is not recovered until the magus has a meal and a full night's sleep. These benefits do not apply to laboratory work — those activities still require a stress die as appropriate, and actual vis must be spent to enchant an item or study Arts.

Pious magic gives the caster partial benefits of a Divine aura, but negates any bonus normally received in a Faerie aura (see the Pious Magic Aura Interaction table). The Divine nature of pious magic is strong enough that characters especially susceptible to the Divine are penalized when resisting it.

It is possible for pious magi to instruct their apprentices in pious magic, rather than Hermetic magic. These characters will encounter in reverse the same difficulties as a normal magus would when learning pious magic, should they wish to convert their practices to Hermetic magic. For starting characters, the following Virtue might be used to sum up the value of this training.

Pious Magic, +4: You have been taught the holy practice known as pious magic. You begin with Pious Magic Theory instead of Magic Theory, and use pious magic for all of your magical activities. Your starting spells and Hermetic abilities are pious variants that would be incomprehensible to a normal magus. You can never have a familiar. You start with a negative reputation of Hedge Wizard 3 among the Order of Hermes because of your eccentric practices and lineage. At some point in your life you have experienced some miraculous event, opening your heart to the Divine and making your understanding of Pious Magic complete.

Pious Ranges, Durations and Targets

Pious magic includes several new categories for spells that are not normally available to those who practice Hermetic magic. These categories are described below.

Presence (Range): The caster can affect a target who can hear his words or see his expression. The spell must be cast using either pious words or gestures at a volume or intensity that is powerful

Pious Magic Aura Interaction

	Magic	Divine	Faerie	Infernal
Pious Magic	+1/2	+1/2	-	-2 ×

Presence	Range category equivalent
-5/-4	Sight
-3/-2	Far
-1/0/+1	Near
+2/+3	Reach
+4/+5	Touch

enough for the target to perceive. The range category to which this range corresponds depends on the caster's Presence, as described below. A spell designed with this range will not function for a character with lower Presence than the inventing magus unless the level is recalculated accordingly. Note that targets with neither sight nor hearing cannot be affected at this range.

Sabbath (Duration): The spell lasts until sundown of the next Saturday, the Biblical Sabbath. A spell cast on Sunday with this Duration will effectively last seven days. This category is equivalent to Sun.

Grace (Duration): A spell with this Duration lasts as long as the caster is in a state of Grace. Such a spell is cast after taking Communion and is broken by committing a sin, such as lying or practicing Hermetic magic. This is equivalent to Moon in level, though it could theoretically last forever.

Multitude (Target): The spell affects all those within sight of the caster, as long as they are loosely gathered into a large group, like an army or a line of pilgrims. This is similar to Group, but affects a larger number of targets and thus is equivalent to Circle.

Faith (Target): The caster can target all those of good will within sight. Those who have been baptized or confirmed into the faith can be separated from the infidel with Finesse rolls when the spell is cast. It is equivalent to Sight.

Pious Arcane Connections

Many aspects of Mythic Christianity naturally establish bonds between members of the Church, and pious magi may use these relationships as Arcane Connections. A pious arcane connection is formed between one performing a sacrament and the one receiving it, which typically lasts for a year. A baptized character may be affected by using one of her Godparents as a pious arcane connection, and a husband and wife, married in the Church, are mystically joined to each other in the same way. These bonds are considered permanent; they do not fade over time. However, if a character breaks the oaths associated with these ceremonies, or in some way strays significantly from the path, the arcane connection might fade. This decision is left to the storyguide to decide, based on the circumstances.

Pious Spells

The following spells are examples of the sort of effects that might be achieved with pious magic, using these new guidelines and limits. When written down, pious spells can be abbreviated with





a (P) to indicate their association, such as *Chiurgeon's Healing Touch* (CrCo20)(P).

The Holy Spring

CrAq 20

R: Near, D: Sun/Inst, T: Ind

Causes a spring of water to well up from the ground where the caster directs. The water is unusually clean and pure, ideal for a baptism, and burns Infernal creatures as if it were acid, doing +15 Damage each round they remain in contact with it.

Manna from Heaven

MuAu 30

R: Far, D: Spec, T: Mult, Ritual

Requisite: Herbam

This spell changes rain or snow into an edible, doughy substance as it falls, enough to feed approximately forty people. The bread is filling and sweet, tasting of rainwater, and slowly «melts» unless it is collected from the ground. A person can survive on nothing else for months, if necessary.

Feed the Multitudes

MuHe15

R: Touch, D: Sun/Inst, T: Ind

Requisite: Animal

This spell changes a single meal into enough food to feed a dozen. Such a meal is typically bread and meat, reminiscent of the miracle of the Loaves and Fishes, though it may be used to affect any meal. With an Aquam requisite, the spell may also affect wine or other potables.

Brilliance of God

MuIg 10

R: Near, D: Conc, T: Room

Illuminates an area as if in full daylight, as long as there is some light, as from a torch or moonlight. The light seems to come from everywhere, casting little shadow, and has a pale, luminous quality. This spell is likely to strike fear in demons and other creatures of the night, and unless they make an appropriate bravery roll they will flee into dark areas until the spell ends.

See No Evil

InIm 5

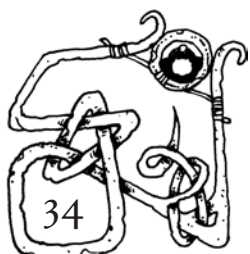
R: Near, D: Conc, T: Room, Ritual

Allows the caster to close his eyes and perceive in his mind an image of his surroundings as they truly are, past any illusions or falsehoods that might otherwise be present. This does not overcome Infernal powers of deception, it only circumvents them; unless they affect the caster's mind, he simply cannot see what is not truly present. He will still perceive other illusory sensations if they are present, such as sounds, smells and substances, though other versions of this spell might allow him to circumvent those as well.

Voice of the Apostles

MuIm 10

R: Near/Sight, D: Sun/Year, T: Ind



Causes the target to become easily heard and more pleasing to listen to. He gains a +3 on rolls to convince or influence others, effectively cancelling out the negative social consequences of the Gift.

Heavenly Inspiration

CrMe 25

R: Eye, D: Sabbath/Year, T: Ind

Inspires the target with a vision of God, drawn from the caster's experience. For the duration of the spell, the target is affected as if he possessed the +1 Virtue Free Expression, gaining +3 on attempts to produce artistic works of great and original significance.

Sense the Spirit of God

InMe 20

R: Near, D: Conc, T: Ind

Tells the caster whether or not the target has a soul, and what kind it is. People, angels and demons have immortal souls, and faeries have mortal souls. Ghosts, magical creatures and animals have no souls.

Oath of God

ReMe 20

R: Eye, D: Sun, T: Ind, Ritual

Requisite: Intellego

The target is unable to speak a lie for the duration of the spell. The target simply cannot force himself to make statements that are partially true, or mixed with lies, though the true parts may slip out. Otherwise, the sounds of lies vary from unintelligible grunts and moans to utter silence, as if the target were mute. This spell effectively forces a demon to be silent, since it is prevented from uttering falsehoods.

The Search for Shelter

InTe 25

R: Spec, D: Conc, T: Str

The caster gets an intuitive sense of the direction and approximate distance to the nearest place of welcome, be it a monastery, town or hermit's cave.

Sense of the Unholy

InVi Gen

R: Near, D: Conc, T: Ind

This spell must be equal to or greater than the Might of the target. Similar to Sense Holiness and Unholiness, it allows the caster to sense if the target is associated with either the Divine or the Infernal, and gives a general idea of its strength. The spell cannot distinguish between the two, but the behaviour of the target may give the pious magus a clue as to its origin.

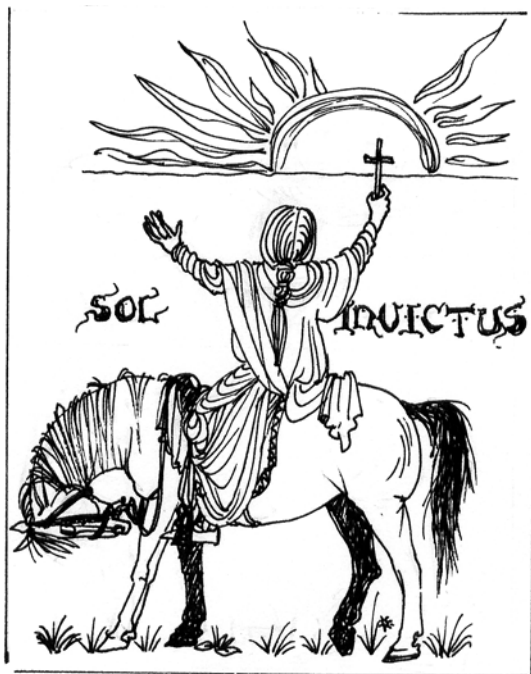
Secret Societies

Sol Invictus ("The Unconquered Sun")

Symbol: A rising sun behind a cross

Motto: *Sol Etiam Oritur* ("The Sun Also Rises")

Origin Myth: In the centuries following the Crucifixion, before the fall of the Roman Empire, many Romans believed the emerging Christian



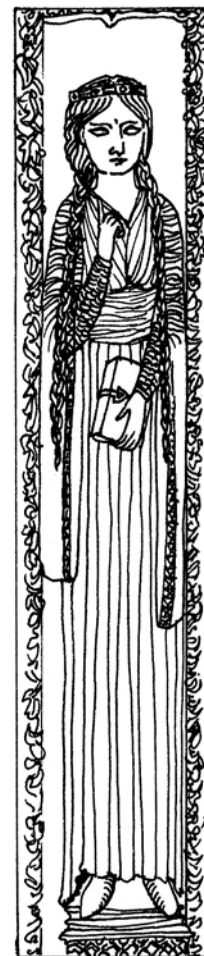
faith to be associated with the worship of the sun-god, as Christ had been called “the sun of righteousness” by the prophets, churches were often built facing east, and Christ’s birth was celebrated on the winter solstice, commonly regarded as the day when the sun regains control of the heavens. Members of this cult believe that God is one of a pantheon of early gods who overshadowed the

others and rose to dominance. The Christian Church administers to the people, but members of this cult believe they alone represent the true priesthood, and that their magic is a Divine gift. They believe that it was their efforts that brought Emperor Constantine victory in 312, and that it is through their influence that the Church has grown and supernaturally conquered virtually all of Europe.

Goals and Practices: The followers of Sol Invictus seek to spread Christianity and the Divine to all corners of the earth, and thus sweep the last traces of other gods from the world. Because their philosophy is considered heretical (the Church does not generally recognize the existence of other gods), they do not work with the Church, and their association with the Order of Hermes is similarly shaky due to the legal ramifications of their purpose (such as regularly molesting the fae). The Cult is extremely careful when recruiting and testing new members, to be sure that its initiates are true believers. All those who join are first taught Pious Magic as the foundation for their beliefs.

Virtues: Sense Holiness and Unholiness +1, Magical Affinity (Creo) +4, Mystic Understanding +4, Purifying Touch +4

Preferred Ordeals: Initiation Quest, Sacrifice of Power (Susceptibility to Divine), Crime-bound (molesting the fae), Zealot.



Corrosives, Poisons and Medicinals

by David Woods

Preface

This article expands and provides additional guidelines for players and storyguides who wish to play around with acids and poisons. They also provide rules that allow magi to generate substances with medicinal effects. These substances fall into three broad classes, corrosives, poisons and medicinals.

I would like to thank Richard Peaty and Andrew Smith for their advice and editorial support.

Corrosives

Corrosives are generally liquids, such as acid, that eat into flesh, wood or stone. The damage done by a corrosive is dependent on coverage, time and potency. The creation of simple alchemical materials such as acids lies entirely within the scope of Aquam and so no requisites are needed.

Corrosives are rated according to the damage they do. A Small amount of conjured acid can fully affect up to an Individual sized object. However, the volume of liquid could be anything from a drop to a bucket. So the same level of spell might

soak a person with a bucketful or merely a drop. The potential damage is the same, although a drop is more easily washed off.

Spreading a Small amount of acid on an object larger than an average human will have a less concentrated effect. The Storyguide should determine how much reduction in the corrosive’s damage rating to apply.

When conjuring larger volumes of acid, larger areas can be affected. An Individual amount of acid can cover up to a Group of individuals. Liquid conjured at target Room can cover a whole building and so on.

Some Sagas may consider corrosives above a certain damage rating as unnatural and require a Perdo requisite to create such fluids.

Poisons

Poisons and drugs work by interaction with the processes on which life depends. Simple alchemical liquids like Mercury (that are naturally toxic) can be generated via Aquam, with no requisites. This principle applies to all naturally occurring poisons. CrHe can create hemlock; CrTe can create arsenic and CrAn can create cobra venom.

Naturally occurring substances however, are often uncertain in application and affect. The Magus also needs to know of their existence. This is simple for alchemical materials found in any laboratory like mercury or well-known poisons like





hemlock. However, a liquid that causes the drinker to fall unconscious for a day, but is otherwise harmless is far more difficult.

So even if a particular plant extract does exactly what the Magus wants, the Magus needs to know of it to conjure it. The Storyguide should require appropriate Herblore, Alchemy or Medicine score before the Magus can generate such material. As such material is not naturally occurring, the magnitude of spell required to conjure it will be proportional to the complexity of the processing normally required.

As a general guide the base level to conjure such material would be equal to the required ability score $\times 5$.

It is up to the Storyguide to determine exactly what is and is not possible for various scores, but guidelines are given in the Aquam Guidelines given below. In essence the Magus is saving himself the 'legwork' of processing a mundane poison or drug from mundane materials.

For instance, consider the storytelling classic of causing a coma so deep that the victim appears dead, only to awaken 24 hours later? The Storyguide might require a Herblore score of 6 or more and assign it a base level of 30.

It is not possible for the Magus to create a magical potion this way. This process only applies to mundane concoctions.

Onset Time and Persistence

Poisons generally require a number of minutes or hours to have an effect. Even injected venoms, that may cause symptoms very quickly, still do damage over the course of hours. However, most poisons are expelled or neutralised by the body within a day.

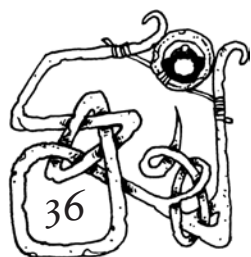
Therefore the appropriate duration for most poisons is Sun. Diameter is too little time to have full effect and poison will generally be clearly from the body within a day, making Moon duration unnecessary.

The exception to the general case is systemic metal poisoning. These poisons can remain in the body for years, causing chronic ill health. Obviously a magically created metallic poison, once the duration expires, would not cause chronic conditions.

The standard onset time for symptoms is 5 combat rounds for inhaled, 1 minute for injected and 30 minutes for ingested or contact poison. A standard poison of any type will cause its full damage gradually, over the course of the next 6 hours (after symptoms begin).

These times may be reduced by adding magnitudes to the effect. Each extra magnitude will halve the times quoted above.

Some Sagas may consider poisons above a certain damage rating as unnatural and require a Perdo requisite to create such fluids.



Doses

When creating specific poisonous material, a Small amount will affect one person, an Individual amount will affect a small wedding party, a Room amount will affect a village, Structure a town and Boundary will generate enough poison to affect a city. This represents one standard dose for each person. However, the guidelines for the effects assume a size +0 creature and one dose.

The effect of a poison will vary according to the size of the victim and the number of doses ingested, injected or applied.

When a victim receives one dose, subtract its Size from the poison's effect magnitude. Partial and multiple doses also affect the magnitude of the poison. Doubling or halving the dose will increase or decrease the magnitude by one level respectively.

Example

A Magus decides to poison a local Giant. His CrAq (He) spell conjures enough poison wine to kill an entire wedding party (about 64 people).

Drinking 64 doses shifts the magnitude up by 6. The Giant however is Size +6 and this is subtracted from the poison's magnitude, bringing the total back to the original fatal effect.

The plan should work, if the magus can get the Giant to drink all the wine...

Concentration

A Small amount of conjured liquid can be any volume between a drop and a bucket, at the choice of the caster. But, whatever the volume the liquid will still contain one standard dose. When larger amounts of liquid are created each cupful represents one standard dose. Adding magnitudes to the spell may increase this concentration. So by adding two magnitudes to the spell a cupful would contain 3 standard doses. By adding three magnitudes a cupful would contain 4 standard doses and so on.

Medicinals

Magi with Alchemy, Herblore or Medicine do not need to spend time digging in flowerbeds to obtain their medicines. But like poisons, conjured medicines are only useful at a duration of at least Sun. Also because of the diverse nature of ailments a Magus is unlikely to have a formulaic for a particular remedy.

However, material conjured at less than Instant duration has no occult properties. Thus their effect is limited and no dramatic cures can be achieved. For example, a honey and herb poultice might be used to prevent or treat infected wounds; an herbal infusion might be given to reduce a person's fever, relieve pain or reduce swelling. A conjured medicine cannot directly cure anything though.

In medieval medicine illness was caused by imbalances in the bodily humours. Medicines

worked to correct these imbalances. This could be achieved by causing the humours to move to or from particular regions or by removing humours. Some however, were considered to add humours and conjured materials are not suitable for this purpose.

Conjured medicines can be used to control disease symptoms and help prevent or treat infected wounds. It is the body that fights the disease or heals the wound, not the medicine. The medicine only provides support for this process.

Magically created medicines are thus limited and the Magus must work within these limitations. Therefore good knowledge of Herbalism, Alchemy or Medicine is essential.

Conjured medicinals can provide a bonus to Herblore or Medicine rolls, equal to the magnitude of the effect (R: Touch D: Sun T: Small). The Magus's score in Alchemy, Herblore or Medicine also limits the magnitude of the spell, to half that score. So a Magus with a Medicine score of 6 can only obtain a +3 bonus.

Although animal and mineral materials were used, medicines were commonly herbal in nature. The Storyguide should penalise players who only conjure Animal or Terram material.

Aquam Guidelines

The following guidelines on poisons (or drugs) relate to those that are ingested. Generating a contact poison is one magnitude more difficult. Inhaled poisons are two magnitudes more difficult. Conversely, injected poisons are one magnitude less difficult.

Poisons created with these guidelines would normally (in a mundane process) have to be specifically processed from raw materials, rather than be naturally occurring. As such they need knowledge of Alchemy, Herblore or Medicine equal to the guideline magnitude to create.

Naturally occurring poisons should be created with the appropriate Form.

The exact effect of a particular poison is up to the Storyguide. The numbers and mechanisms given below are examples only. Although they focus on poisons they can be used judge an appropriate level for a particular drug.

Note that ageing afflictions gained through the action of a poison are treatable with Creo magic. As they are not the result of the ravages of time the Hermetic Limit does not cover them.

Creo Aquam

By default Creo Aquam poisons are made colourless and tasteless. Mimicking particular liquids like wine or milk may be reliably achieved by adding appropriate requisites.

General: Creates a corrosive liquid that does + Level -5 damage on contact per minute of exposure, for five minutes. Increasing the Target increases the volume of liquid and so the area that can be affected. The liquid emits a strong odour

and is generally unpalatable. However, if a human or animal were to ingest it, they would take + Level damage per minute for five minutes.

Level 5: Creates one dose of colourless and tasteless poison that causes stomach cramps, drowsiness or equivalent. The victim rolls Sta + a stress die and subtracts the result from 48 hours, which gives the duration of the symptoms. The victim suffers a -3 penalty during this time.

Level 10: Creates one dose of colourless and tasteless poison that causes severe stomach cramps, drowsiness or equivalent. The victim rolls Sta + a stress die and subtracts the result from 48 hours, which gives the duration of the symptoms. The victim suffers a -5 penalty during this time. Victim must make his natural resistance test (Sta stress roll of 9+) or suffer minor complications for days.

Level 15: Creates one dose of colourless and tasteless poison that causes incapacity. The victim rolls Sta + a stress die and subtracts the result from 48 hours, which gives the duration of the symptoms. Victim must make his natural resistance test (Sta stress roll of 9+) or suffer minor complications for weeks.

Level 20: Creates one dose of colourless and tasteless poison that causes minor symptoms for days. Treat poisoning as a Hurt wound for recovery purposes. Victim must make his natural resistance test (Sta stress roll of 9+) or suffer an annoying ageing affliction (0).

Level 25: Creates one dose of colourless and tasteless poison that causes major symptoms for weeks. Treat poisoning as a Medium wound for recovery purposes. Victim must make his natural resistance test (Sta stress roll of 9+) or suffer a minor ageing affliction (-1).

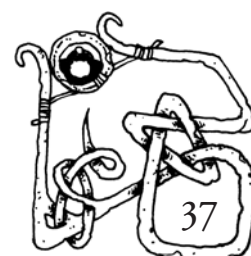
Level 30: Creates one dose of colourless and tasteless poison that is potentially fatal. Treat poisoning as an Incapacitated wound for recovery purposes. Victim must make his natural resistance test (Sta stress roll of 9+) or suffer a major ageing affliction (-2).

Level 35: Creates one dose of colourless and tasteless poison that is almost always fatal. Victim must make his natural resistance test (Sta stress roll of 9+) or die about 6 hours after the start of symptoms. If the victim succeeds, treat poisoning as an Incapacitated wound for recovery purposes. Victim must make his natural resistance test (Sta stress roll of 9+) or suffer a debilitating ageing affliction (-5).

Muto Aquam

The Creo Aquam poison guidelines can also be used when changing a liquid into a poison.

*M*ECINAS ATAVIS·IDITEKIBUS·
 &presidium·&dulce·decaumeum·
 S unt quoscurriculo puluerem olympicum
 Collegisse·huere·metaq·feruisc·DEALMETIS





Ex Libris

by Michaël de Verteuil

This is fourth in a series of articles presented as a regular column in *Hermes' Portal* called Heretic's Corner, which is dedicated to cleaning up, simplifying and harmonizing the *Ars Magica* rules. So far, we have covered reducing the number and types of die rolls ("The Magic of Simplification" in *Mythic Perspectives* 11), as well as the number of Abilities ("Less is More" in *HP1*), and how to convert the Arts into Exceptional Knowledges ("Artistic Ability" in *HP2*). Each of these articles has been progressively more ambitious, but the time has come to rein things in a bit and concentrate on a less central, but still significant, feature of the game: the book rules.

This had not been my original intention. I was toying earlier with an article on simplifying combat, and then on a system for systematizing the cost of Virtues. A future article on the learning and teaching rules is also in the works. Sad to say, there are few rule features of our beloved game that couldn't benefit from the treatment of a strong dose of a healthy purgative and a reduced calorie diet.

I finally settled on the book rules for two reasons. First off, they are a mess. Half of them are in the main rules, half of them are in the *WGRE*, and yet another (virtual, which is why I can have three) half is in *HP1*. The second reason was the persistent but polite and pleasant hectoring and badgering I was subjected to by Bjarke Roth, who insisted on receiving my views on his own proposed reform of the book rules.

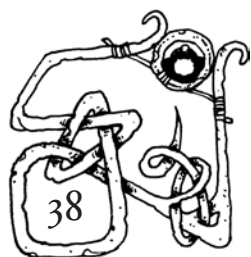
I never got very far in commenting on Bjarke's draft, but I found our brainstorming so stimulating that I dropped my initial plans and decided to tackle the book rules instead. I think it would be safe to say that without Bjarke's help, this article would not have been written. You can perhaps look forward to Bjarke's own take in a future issue of *HP*, though obviously it won't be quite as focussed on simplification for its own sake as this or any other Heretic's Corner article would be. For now, however, the stage is mine.

So let's start with a basic question: What's wrong with the current book rules? Well, I'm sorry to tantalize you like this, but I only have so many pages and so am not going to answer this question directly. Instead, I will pose another (completely objective and value free, of course): Why are the book rules so plethoric, contradictory, unsystematic, over-detailed, and (let's be honest here) just plain broken? I can offer six reasons for this sad state of affairs. But let me begin by making it perfectly clear that I am not blaming anyone. The original rules were rather silly anyway, and the new rules at least represented an effort to make books more interesting, useful and realistic. On all

these three counts the guil..., I mean the authors, were at least partially successful, but...

Here are the six reasons I promised:

1. The new book rules were not sufficiently playtested. I am not being catty here; this is just a statement of fact. If you check the rogue's gallery of *ArM4* playtesters, you will find this heretic's name prominently displayed in that hall of shame. All I can say in my own and the authors' defence is that inadequate playtesting is a natural consequence of introducing major changes cold with a new edition. This is why it is so important for proposed new rules to circulate as widely as possible beforehand during the hiatus between editions. This is just my way of saying that if any of these Heretic's Corner suggestions find their way into an eventual *ArM5* and bomb like the current book rules have, it will be your fault for not trying them out and doing the preliminary brushwork for the future playtesters. As a mad inventor might say: "I am not responsible".
2. The authors appear to have been inordinately enthralled by the many different types of books available in the Middle Ages, and sought to convey this authentic medieval "feel" to their fellow *Ars* fans. In this they were reasonably successful as we have since all been pontificating about *summae*, *tractatus*, *libri quaestionum* and *commentarii* (all varyingly glossed, of course, except for the authorities) as if we all had intimate first hand experience with them. Unfortunately, this simulationism has come at the expense of play balance (read "inflated power levels") and simplicity (a far greater sin from the perspective of Heretic's Corner).
3. Despite the authors' aspirations at simulationism, none of them were professional medievalists. As this heretic doesn't happen to be either, this must be assessed as an entirely forgivable failing. Nevertheless, it has led indirectly to the rather quirky consequence that the rules ended up being written from a rather narrow and not entirely appropriate perspective: namely that of the medieval academic curriculum. 99% of medieval books did not figure on the academic curriculum and, presumably, none of those on Hermetic magic did. To give another example, the basic medieval text was the *tractatus*, not the stodgy *summa* so dear (cough, cough) to the hearts of diligent schoolboys everywhere. Yet a surface reading of the rules suggests that *tractatus* were merely a residual to which one only resorted after having exhausted a *summa*. (WRONG!)



Let me give you an even more specific example of what I mean. One of the most common types of medieval books is a monastic chronicle. Such a book would count as a tractatus on Local Area Lore with lots of juicy gossip about local figures and families, local geography and local history. No one is ever likely to write a summa on Local Area Lore. Such a tractatus would be a perfectly acceptable introductory text for anyone wanting to know about the local area. Most medieval books are like that. They don't pretend to comprehensive coverage. They aren't written for the schools. And no one plans to use them for systematic study.

4. Despite this skewed focus on the academic curriculum and the incongruity of magi (the main consumers of books in most sagas) never having received the benefits of a "liberal" education in the formal sense in the first place, another problem emerges from the fact that the rule mechanics were written with the Hermetic Arts in mind, with coverage of the mundane Knowledges (i.e. the actual subjects taught under the medieval curriculum) being treated as an awkward afterthought.
5. Nonetheless, and in spite of this apparent focus on the interests of magi, the new book rules astonishingly failed to cover whole categories of books that are just as central to the practice of Hermetic magic. I am talking about spell books and lab texts. In this, the authors simply ended up reinforcing what is, in my view, a rather unhealthy and munchkinistic (Yes, you there in the back, this means **you**) obsession with improving one's Arts as the be all and end all of Hermetic existence. The fact that this article is the first to address this issue in the soon-to-be six years since the appearance of *ArM4* is rather telling.
6. Finally, a belated recognition by the authors of some of the mechanical shortcomings of the *ArM4* and *WGRE* rules led to an unsystematic and patchwork effort at repair in *HP1*. While these proposed changes definitely make abuse of the earlier inconsistencies in the rules more difficult, they leave the whole with the unfortunate appearance of a threadbare quilt, barely held together here and there by a mess of arbitrary stand-alone ukases.

Having cunningly outlined reasons **why** the rules might be less than perfect, without actually describing all the alleged specific mechanical failings in any detail, Heretic's Corner will now offer up its own version of the book rules as they **ought** to have been written originally.

The Book Rules: Smaller, Shorter and Definitely Cut

(with apologies to South Park; blame Hibernia)

I propose we reduce the number of "types" of books to two: summae and tractatus. A summa is aimed at providing comprehensive understanding of a field which can extend from a relatively narrow specialization, spell or enchantment to a whole Art or Knowledge. A tractatus, on the other hand is a text focussed on a specific issue, subject or topic. While often quite detailed, a tractatus does not aspire to the broad general coverage of a summa. Nonetheless, both book types can serve as excellent introductory texts: the summa because of its systematic laying out of the field, the tractatus because its pointed yet discursive approach stimulates interest and in so doing introduces key concepts to the reader.

Deeper study is initially best pursued from a summa, but no summa can easily encompass all there is to know about a Knowledge or Art. Eventually the student must rely on various individual tractatus and try as best he can to cull and integrate the often apparently disconnected facts and observations they contain into a systematic understanding of his chosen field of study. This, in simplified form, represents the approach to medieval self-study these proposed rules are meant to simulate.

Summae and tractatus exist across four "classes" of subjects. These are the Knowledges as well as the Hermetic Arts, Spells and Enchantments. The last three are normally only of interest to magi. Summae and tractatus perform analogous roles within each of these classes.

Every book has a level determined at the start of its composition. The level of a book represents its breadth, originality and utility. A high level book will contain facts, arguments and observations not commonly encountered elsewhere and, as such, will prove more useful to a student than a low level counterpart. A book's level remains constant and may never be improved other than through rewriting.

Each book also has a Quality which represents the accessibility of the information it contains for the reader. By this I mean the clarity of the ideas expressed as well as the appropriate and unambiguous use of words and phrasing. A book's underlying Quality is also fixed at the start of composition (though it can be optionally improved by glossing, and subsequent copies can optionally benefit from improved physical presentation and layout).

Whatever a book's level or Quality, a reader's score in an Art or Knowledge may never be increased by more than three levels as a result of a single season of study. A Scribe score of at least 3 is required to write or copy a book. Writing a book is done in whole seasons, but several books can be copied in a single season depending on the book





type and length. Seasons spent writing or copying a book need not be consecutive.

Knowledges

An author can write a summa on a Knowledge of a level equal to half his score in that Knowledge (rounded down). The Quality of such a summa is equal to the author's COM + Scribe + 3 at the start of composition. Writing a summa on a Knowledge is done in two stages. In the first, the author researches his material and gathers references and notes at the rate of INT + Scribe experience points per season. Once the number of experience points accumulated in this way equals the total indicated by the level of the summa (i.e. 1 ep for level 1, 3 eps for level 2, 6 eps for level 3, etc.), the preparatory stage is complete. The author then begins the actual composition process at the rate of COM + Scribe experience points per season. Once the number of experience points accumulated in this way again equals the total indicated by the level of the summa, the work is finally complete. If the author dies or abandons his work after completing the preparatory stage, a second author who has studied the notes for a season and whose score in the Knowledge at least equals the intended level of the book may resume the work at the beginning of the composition stage, substituting his own COM + Scribe for that of the original author. If either author suffers from the Incomprehensible Flaw, the summa will as well.

Here is an example. Incitus, a professor at the university of Bologna, has scores in Civil and Canon Law and Scribe Latin of 7 and 4 respectively, an INT of +2 and a COM of +1. He refuses to have his students use an already existing summa on Civil Law composed by his rival Majorus whom he despises, and so sets about writing his own summa which will have a level of 3 (i.e. his Civil and Canon Law 7 divided by 2, rounded down) and a Quality of 8 (COM + Scribe + 3). After consulting previous authors, combing through precedents and organizing his material, which takes only one season (as his INT + Scribe equals the six eps contained in a level 3 summa), he begins the actual composition of the work. This takes him a further two seasons (as his COM + Scribe only equals 5, one short of the 6 required to finish the work in a single season) for a total of three.

A scribe can copy a summa on a Knowledge at the rate of $3 \times (\text{DEX} + \text{Scribe})$ experience points per season of copying. A reader gains a number of experience points in a Knowledge equal to $(\text{INT} + \text{Quality})/5$ (rounded up) per season spent studying a summa. The reader may continue studying from a given summa over several seasons until his score in the Knowledge equals the level of the summa.

An author can write a tractatus on a Knowledge of a level equal to his score at the start of composition. There is no limit to the number of

tractatus an author can write on a Knowledge. The Quality of such a tractatus is equal to the author's COM + Scribe. Tractatus are simpler and much easier to write than summae. As such, they do not require any separate research time. Writing a tractatus on a Knowledge takes one season, and three can be copied in a single season. A reader who spends a season studying a tractatus on a Knowledge gains a number of experience points in that Knowledge equal to $(\text{INT} + \text{Quality})/5$ (rounded up). A tractatus may only be studied once for effect, and the score achieved may not exceed the level of the tractatus.

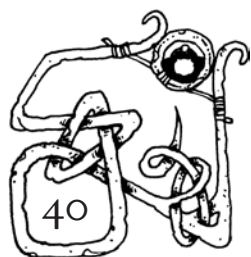
Arts

Summae and tractatus may also be written on each of the Hermetic Arts. The rules are the same as for works on Knowledges, with the following modifications. A season spent on the preparation of a summa on an Art advances that stage by a number of points equal to $5 \times (\text{INT} + \text{Scribe})$. A season spent on composition of the work advances completion by $5 \times (\text{COM} + \text{Scribe})$ points. A summa on an Art can be copied at the rate of $15 \times (\text{DEX} + \text{Scribe})$ points per season. A student gains a number of points in an Art from reading a summa equal to INT + Quality per season. A mage studying a tractatus on an Art for a season will gain a number of points in the Art equal to INT + Quality.

Spells

A summa on a spell (or ritual) is called a grimoire. Conventionally, these are often bound together into collections (also called grimoires), but each summa on a spell will have its own level (equal to the magnitude of the spell) and Quality (equal to the author's COM + Scribe). Working from lab notes gathered while inventing or learning a spell, a mage can write a grimoire on one or more spells he knows for the use of others at the rate of $5 \times (\text{COM} + \text{Scribe})$ magnitudes per season, and may copy a grimoire at the rate of $15 \times (\text{DEX} + \text{Scribe})$ magnitudes per season. An unlearned spell can be cast from a grimoire with a modifier to the casting total equal to the grimoire's Quality - 6. The same modifier applies to lab totals when attempting to learn a spell or ritual from a grimoire.

A mage can write any number of tractatus on a spell he has already mastered. The level of such a tractatus is equal to the magnitude of the spell, and the Quality is equal to the author's COM + Scribe. It takes one season to write a spell tractatus, and three can be copied in a single season. A mage gains a number of experience points towards mastery of a spell he has already learned equal to $(\text{INT} + \text{Quality})/5$ (rounded up) from studying a tractatus on that spell for a season. A mage may only study a given spell tractatus once for effect, though he may usefully study any number of different tractatus on the same spell until he



has mastered it. One cannot cast or learn a spell directly from a spell tractatus, but one can add the lower of its level or Quality to one's lab total if one consults the tractatus while inventing an identical spell.

Enchantments

A summa on an enchantment or on a lab improvement or modification is called a lab text. Working from lab notes gathered while enchanting a device, potion, familiar or lab improvement, a mage can write a lab text for general use once the enchantment has been completed at the rate of $5 \times (\text{COM} + \text{Scribe})$ magnitudes of the enchantment per season. If the author is not the original enchanter he must spend a season studying the enchanter's notes before writing the lab text. A lab text can be copied at the rate of $15 \times (\text{DEX} + \text{Scribe})$ magnitudes per season. The level of a lab text is equal to the Magic Theory score of the author and the Quality is equal to the author's $\text{COM} + \text{Scribe}$. A lab text is not studied. Rather, it is consulted by a mage while attempting to reproduce the enchantment it contains, and adds the lower of its level or Quality to the mage's lab total to this end. If the enchanting mage is the author of the lab text, it adds its full level to his efforts to reproduce the enchantment regardless of Quality. In fact, the enchanting mage can gain the same benefit from his own notes, and need not go through the process of actually writing a full lab text unless he wishes to share his experience with others.

Options

The rules proposed above preserve the essentials of the existing book rules, while simplifying them, ironing out their inconsistencies (such as Art tractatus based on spell mastery) and extending their coverage to grimoires and lab texts. We can now look at various options that reintroduce some of the features culled from the original rules for the sake of simplicity, that harmonize the proposed rules with those offered up in previous instalments of Heretic's Corner, that extrapolate from existing rules in the canon, or that simply provide minor but interesting variations.

Libri Quaestionum

These were one of the more popular innovations introduced in *ArM4*. I propose treating them as specialized summae (described for emphasis as "summae (LQ)") whose comprehensiveness has been partially sacrificed for the sake of enhanced Quality. An author cannot write a summa (LQ) at a level higher than one third his score in the relevant Art or Knowledge (rounded down). The Quality of a summa (LQ) is equal to the author's $\text{COM} + \text{Scribe} + 6$. Otherwise a summa (LQ) can be used exactly like a conventional summa with no special rules for "target level" or restrictions on the number of seasons it can be profitably studied from, up to a score equal to its level.

Authorities

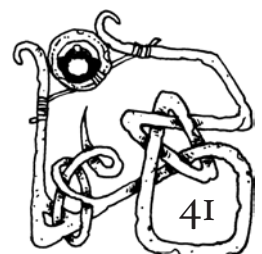
A popular, though problematic, feature of the *WGRE* was the introduction of rules aimed at providing mechanics for the authorities tantalizingly alluded to in the section on Academic Knowledges in *ArM4*. Aside from complicating the picture, the *WGRE* ended up adding to the confusion surrounding what exactly an "authority" was intended to be. I propose a return to the original definition which can be inferred from *ArM4*, i.e. an authority consists of the collected works on a Knowledge or Art by one or more recognized "auctores" for that Knowledge or Art. While any book, such as a tractatus (now described for emphasis as a "tractatus (A)"), written by such an auctor will be considered "authoritative" for that Knowledge or Art, only summae written by an auctor (now described for emphasis as "summae (A)") are so in a comprehensive sense and can be treated as "core texts" for that Knowledge or Art.

I know this sounds complicated, but it's really very simple. Once a student with a positive Intelligence has exhausted all he can learn normally from a summa (A), he may continue to study from the work as an authoritative core text at a reduced Quality of 0 by relying on implications, allusions or analogies that can legitimately be inferred from the work. How long he can continue to do so without having to seek additional insight from another authoritative work depends on his Intelligence: 2 seasons with a +1 INT, 6 seasons with a +2 INT, 12 seasons with a +3 INT, 20 seasons with a +4 INT, 30 seasons with a +5 INT, indefinitely with Mythic Intelligence.

If he wishes to continue to study from the "authority" once he has exhausted these seasons, he must first find a new (i.e. unread by him) text of any kind on that Art or Knowledge written by one of the field's recognized auctores (this is where an unread tractatus (A) might come in handy, though this new text could just as easily be another as yet unread summa (A)). After he has studied from this authoritative text for a season (usefully or not), our student will have regained sufficient insight to return to the same or another core text (i.e. summa (A) for that Knowledge or Art) and may study from it again as an "authority" for the indicated number of seasons depending on his Intelligence, after which he must search out a new authoritative work for inspiration yet again.

Commentaries

As there are no longer any restrictions on the number of tractatus that can be written by an author, there is no longer any need for commentaries as a separate type of book. If characters wish to write commentaries, they may, but from a mechanical point of view, these are indistinguishable from regular tractatus.





Physical Quality

From what I can tell, the current rules for Physical Quality are fine, except that they should apply to grimoires and lab texts as well. One additional option, however, would be to modify the Quality of 0 used in “authoritative study” from a summa (A) by the book’s Physical Quality. Under the current rules it is not clear whether authorities are affected by Physical Quality.

Glossing

A book can be glossed to improve its Quality. A glossator substitutes his own COM + Scribe for that of the author, but a book’s Quality may never be increased by more than 3 through glossing. It takes as long to Gloss a book as it does to copy one. All books, including tractatus can be glossed. Glossing does not affect authoritative study. A given copy of a book may not be usefully glossed more than once. An “incomprehensible” book remains “incomprehensible”, even after glossing. This is because it is an author’s ideas that are incomprehensible, not his words.

Rounding

Because of frequent division by 5 in some formulae, rounding can be very significant. For example a mage with a +5 INT can study authoritatively from a summa (A) on an Art five times as effectively as a mage with an INT of +1. The same two magi, however, will study authoritatively from a summae (A) on a Knowledge at exactly the same rate. One option would be to round off to the nearest integer instead of rounding up.

Arts as Abilities, and Speak vs. Scribe

Diligent readers of Heretic’s Corner will have noticed that the Hermetic Arts can be dispensed with as a separate class for books if Arts are treated as Exceptional Knowledges as proposed in *HP2*. Also, if Scribe is limited to the purely mechanical aspects of writing (as proposed in *HP1*) and not extended to composition, Speak Latin can be substituted for Scribe Latin when writing a book if one is assisted by a sufficiently competent amanuensis. Such a change would tend to increase the average quality of books, but not abusively so.

For example, an author with a +1 COM, Speak Latin 5 and Scribe Latin 3 working with an amanuensis with a Scribe Latin of 6 would be able to “write” a tractatus based on the lower of his Speak Latin score of 5 and his amanuensis’ Scribe Latin of 6. If the author scribed the book himself, it would have had a Quality of $1 + 3 = 4$. With the aid of the amanuensis, however, the book can be written with a Quality of $1 + 5 = 6$. This assumes, of course, that the amanuensis can speak enough Latin to take dictation.

Spell and Enchantment Mastery

The more perspicacious readers may have noticed that all but the least intelligent of magi are probably better off practising their spells in an

effort to acquire spell mastery than attempting to learn such mastery from a tractatus. This is because the current spell practice rules are idiotically generous as compared to other forms of practice, and need changing.

The perspicacious may also have noticed that no mechanics are proposed here for tractatus on enchantments. This is because there are no rules in the canon for an enchantment counterpart to spell mastery. I could tentatively suggest that one ep towards the mastery of a particular enchantment be granted to a mage each time he successfully completes it, and that such mastery automatically grant him the benefits of a lab text (whether he has one on hand or not) when repeating the enchantment, while also permitting him to complete three such enchantments simultaneously (using three times the vis, of course, and risking the corresponding extra botch dice). But as this article is about book rules, I won’t. Do your own extrapolation!

Affinities

Affinities which cover a whole or several Arts (e.g. Elementalist) are either irrelevant to book writing, or they add to the author’s score when computing the level of a book on an Art or Knowledge. Take your pick. If you choose the latter interpretation, however, I would strongly recommend dropping the Increased Understanding result from the Twilight Results Table (along with any similar Virtues) and replacing it with the gain or improvement of an Affinity in a relevant Art.

Summae as Tractatus

Even with the rules proposed here, there is still little incentive to keep low level summae in your library if you have a higher level one available (assuming Quality is constant). One optional solution to this problem would be to permit a reader to treat a summa from which he has not studied as a tractatus in the relevant Art, Spell or Knowledge with the same Quality but with twice the level. For example, Scroungeus checks through a book monger’s stall near the university of Paris and comes across a copy of Bede’s *De natura rerum*, a level 3 summa on Philosophiae which he has never read. His own score in Philosophiae is 5, so he buys the book and studies from it just as if it were a level 6 tractatus (i.e. twice its level as a summa). As 6 is higher than his score of 5, he can profitably study the work for a season.

Analysis

There are a few key (and lots of minor) changes involved in these proposed book rules that might not be immediately obvious, mainly those relating to tractatus. There is now no longer any limit on the number of tractatus an author can write. On the other hand, tractatus now have levels beyond which they can no longer advance your score in an Art or Knowledge. These levels are generous, but strictly related to the score of the



author. It is through tractatus that an author can set down what he knows (or thinks he knows) but cannot integrate within the framework of a summa.

There are two reasons for the division of writing time into research and composition. The first is simply that it sets the total number of seasons involved in writing a summa at what I think it should be, without having to rely on unnecessarily complex formulae. The second is that it brings the process of writing a summa on an Art or Knowledge into greater conformity with that implied in the original rules for grimoires and lab texts. I also like the fact that it creates the potential for interesting adventure seeds centred on plagiaristic composition based on stolen, discovered or inherited research notes, or even collaborative book writing. (“Here, you know all this stuff and have a gifted quill. Take these notes and see what you can do about writing them up in good Latin.”)

Looking at these proposed rules from the perspective of the more constrained range of scores for Knowledges, rather than the wider ones for Arts, provides some insight on what might be an appropriate level for various types of summae. The maximum score in a Knowledge a superhumanly single-minded mundane scholar might acquire while teaching an average of three out of four seasons a year is probably 15. This is a highly improbable score, however, and the game mechanics tend to break down, in any case, once Abilities begin to exceed 10. Nonetheless, this can be used to conclude that the maximum level of a summa is probably 7, with the vast majority being level 3, 4 or 5. Keep in mind that while writing books may make you a famous and valued member of your intellectual circle, it also takes up a lot of time. That magnificent Level 7 first edition summa on Magic Theory you may find on the shelf in the library at Doissetep will have taken over two years of continuous writing time to complete, and probably even longer given the inevitable breaks and interruptions.

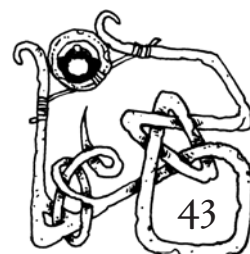
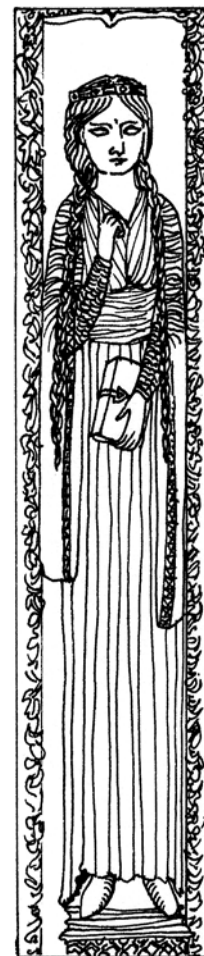
A level 1 summa would obviously be pointless. The level restriction is too severe given that studying virtually any book for a season will provide you with more than one ep. But why not a level 2? For the simple reason that a level 2 summa (LQ) is relatively easy to write and obviously superior to its low level ordinary summa counterpart. Why write

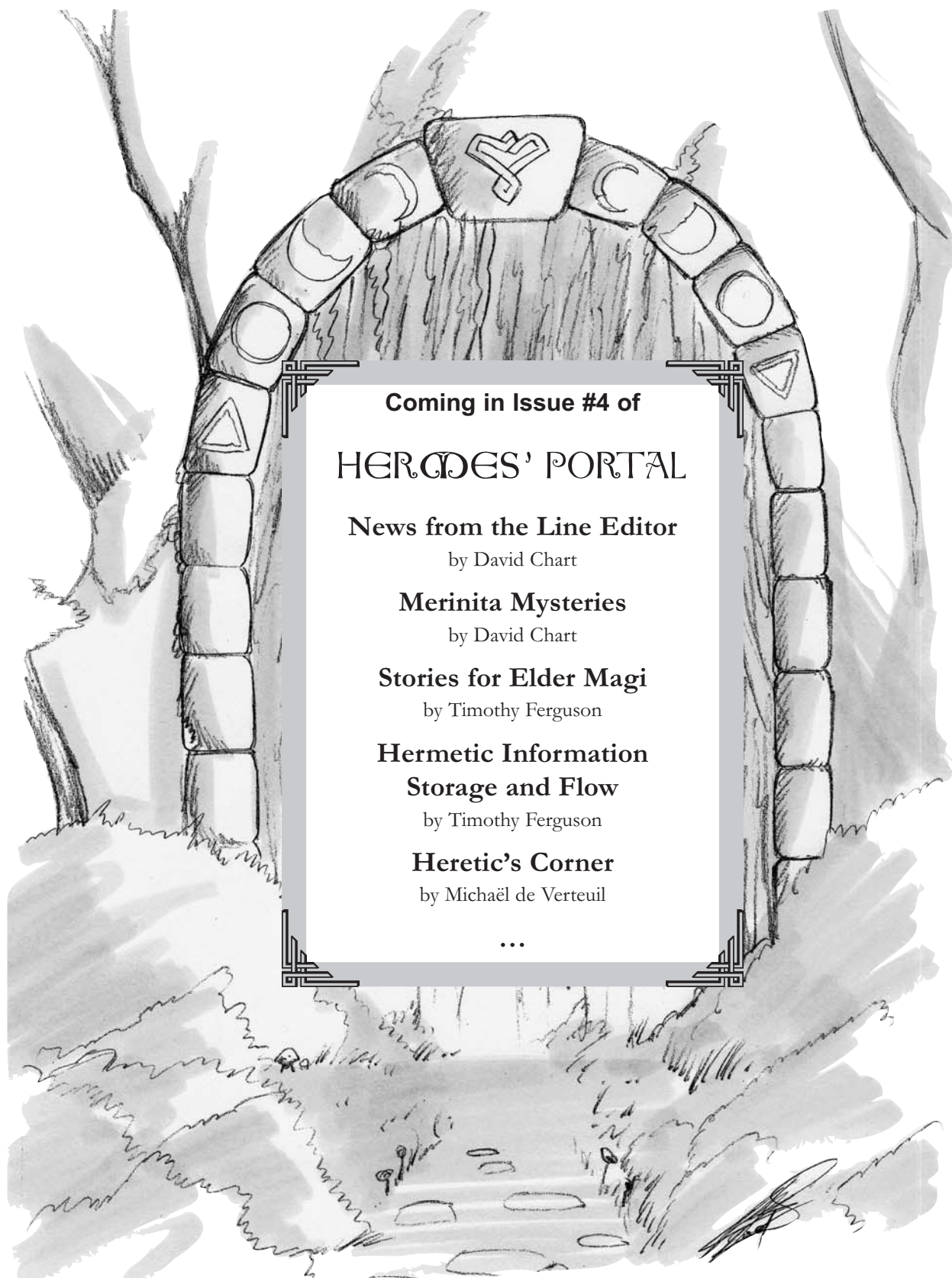
an ordinary level 2 summa, when there are probably level 2 summa (LQ) available that can do the job better? Summae (LQ) of levels 3, 4 or 5 would also be superior to their ordinary counterparts, but would also be very difficult to write. There may not be one for every Knowledge. One would assume that scholars with the necessary scores have better things to do with their time than write primers for mid-level scholars. In any case, we can thus conclude that a summa of level 2 is likely to be a summa (LQ), one of 4 or 5 is likely to be an ordinary summa, while a level 3 summa might be either, but probably only an ordinary one.

What of summae (A)? There is no reason to assume that auctores had astronomic scores in their respective Knowledges (even for Artes Liberales!). They were merely the first to define the conceptual parameters for their respective fields. If summae (A) were of level 6 or 7, there would be, in any case, no point in anyone writing or using ordinary summae. For purposes of play balance and simplification, I suggest that summae (A) that cover a whole Knowledge all be treated as level 5. Those that cover a narrow specialization (like one of the Artes Liberales) should be treated as level 3, while those covering wider specializations or a number of narrow ones should be level 4.

The natural inference that one can draw from this analysis of summae on Knowledges is that Art summae (LQ) will range in level from 5 to 7, ordinary Art summae would range from 7 to 12 or so, while the three kinds of Art summae (A) would range in levels from 6 to 8, 8 to 10, and 11 to 13 respectively. In practice and according to the current rules, however, they would probably tend to hover somewhat above each of these ranges because of generous rules for learning Arts from vis (which need changing), the possibility of “Increased Understanding” (which I have banned from my sagas) resulting from Twilight, and, most importantly perhaps, the longer average life span of magi. Much would depend on your saga. There is definitely room for thought here.

In any case, that’s it for this instalment of Heretic’s Corner. I hope to see you in HP4. Keep those ideas coming. I am sure there is enough material out there for a couple more years of articles unless *ArM5* comes upon us by surprise. And then we can always work on simplifying that!





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